

T H O U G H T S

O N

M O R A L G O V E R N M E N T ,

A G E N C Y , &c.



T H O U G H T S
ON
MORAL GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY,
AND
The ORIGIN of MORAL EVIL;
IN OPPOSITION TO THE DOCTRINE OF
ABSOLUTE, MORAL, CHRISTIAN,
AND
PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY.
ALSO,
S T R I C T U R E S
ON
Dr. Priestley's Correspondence with Dr. Price,
ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God. *James.*
And justify the Ways of God to Man. *Milton.*

By L. BUTTERWORTH,
Author of a Treatise on Natural and Revealed Religion.

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THOUGHTS

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O N

Moral Government, Agency, &c.

INTRODUCTION.

THE subject which is now presented to the candid public, is probably the most intricate one, in the whole compass of Ethics and Theology, comprehending such a great variety of very important objects, that it is matter of doubt whether any man possesses sufficient ability, so to solve the question in dispute, concerning *Moral Agency*, as to leave no room for further objections and investigation. It would therefore, be the height of presumption, in me, to imagine that I shall be able to satisfy every enquirer, or convince every one that my hypothesis is right; especially, when I consider, that men of the greatest abilities for theological disquisition, have exerted all their powers, and used every argument

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they were masters of, without giving that satisfaction to their readers, which was expected. All that I pretend to do, is only to contribute my mite towards bringing the matter to such an issue, as may serve to fix the wavering minds of men on the solid basis of *immutable* truth. My only aim is to search out truth; and on whatever side of the question it may be found, I hope, I shall cordially embrace it, without the least degree of reluctance, or reserve. I have not entered the lists with any single antagonist, to try my skill in argument; nor do I intend to waste my readers time, by shewing how dexterously I can wield the falchion of controversy; or use to advantage the powerful engine of sophism. And, though I may be obliged to bring forward the arguments of various Authors, yet I have no intention purposely to write against them, and shall only introduce them for the sake of throwing light upon the subject: and if I am necessarily led to name those Authors, I shall mention them not as my adversaries, but as men who have freely communicated their sentiments to the public, having an undoubted right to think and determine for themselves.

To the thoughtful and inquisitive mind, there is, probably, no subject of greater moment than God's Moral Government; and very few that are so difficult to be comprehended. As we cannot by searching find out God; so, neither can we find out his ways in providence, nor
his

INTRODUCTION.

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his government of *Moral Agents*, to perfection : yet, we are no where forbidden to contemplate these mysterious objects ; for though we can neither fully comprehend the Divine Being, nor his ways in providence ; yet by a diligent and impartial research, we may increase our knowledge of both. But every enquiry of his nature, should be attempted with all becoming humility, and self diffidence. And in this manner, I wish to conduct my present enquiries.

To render the success of every essay of this nature, even probable, it is necessary, strictly to adhere to some order, which shall be the most likely to conduct us to a right conclusion. The main object of our present investigation is this: *Is GOD the Author of moral evil?* That we may be led to a right conclusion, we must examine into the perfections of the MORAL GOVERNOR ; the abilities and capacities of *Moral Agents* ; their obligations to render obedience, and their power so discharge those obligations ; the nature of *Moral Government* ; the nature of *Moral Evil*, &c. &c.

P A R T I.

T H O U G H T S
O N
Moral Government and Agency.

S E C T. I.
On the Perfections of the Moral Governor.

PERHAPS, there is nothing more intimately connected with the subject in dispute, than the nature, properties and perfections of the Deity, as the Creator and Governor of the moral world. For it is reasonable to conclude, that his conduct in Creation and Providence, must bear the strictest relation to his nature and perfections. We rationally expect every being to act conformably to itself, it's nature and it's powers: and if ever we find it otherwise, we naturally infer, that it must be owing to the agency of a superior.

To become intimately acquainted, therefore, with the nature and perfections of the Deity, is the most probable mode to enable us to determine, with any degree of certainty, from what cause the various events in the moral world proceed; for light is not the cause of darkness, neither is darkness the cause of light. Every effect must proceed from it's own proper cause.

I. THE

The Perfections of the Moral Governor. 5

1. THE nature of the Divine Being is GOODNESS: or the very opposite to evil of every kind. He is all *Goodness*: as he is the most perfect, so he is the best of all Beings. *Goodness* in the Moral Governor appears to be a kind of universal property, which pervades all his attributes. He is the standard of goodness to all his creatures; and could as soon cease to be, as cease to be *good*.

THE *Goodness* of the Divine Being, is manifested in all the works of his hands, and also in his providential dispensations towards mankind: Every dispensation of his will is good; for though it be said, "Is there evil in a city, " and the Lord hath not done it?" Yet this is to be understood of the evil of affliction, sent by the Deity to correct the wickedness of men; which is an act of goodness, evidently intended, either to prevent their going to greater lengths in sin and wickedness, or to deter others from walking in the same steps. The Moral Governor could as soon cease to be the *supreme active Agent* in the universe, as do that which is not *good*, *good* in itself; or do that which shall not ultimately terminate in his own praise. To punish the guilty, is as much an *act of goodness*, as to preserve the innocent. God is under a necessity of nature to chastise transgressors, because to do that, is *good*. And while some wonder that any of the human race, are the subjects of divine punishment, it is much greater matter of astonishment, that any escape, and that all are not made to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

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Should it be asserted, that it would be a greater act of goodness to annihilate the wicked, than torment them for ever. It may be replied, that the Almighty is a God of *impartial Justice*, as well as *Goodness*. How unbefitting is it, for a worm of the dust to dispute with Omnipotence, and to say to the All-wise Creator, why dost thou so? If God should remit the punishment of sin, how could his *goodness to himself, his justice and his law*, whose honour has been injured by sin, be vindicated, without punishing the transgressor? And are these to be neglected for the sake of indiscriminately extending *Goodness*, according to our imperfect idea of it, to the final impenitent? If punishment be not an act of *Goodness*, we may rest assured, that the Divine Being will never punish the sinner; for he can do nothing but that which is *good*.

2. THE *Moral Governor* is immutably and immaculately *holy*: He is *holy* in his Essence, and *holy* in all his works and ways. He cannot do that which is sinful himself, neither can he command it to be done by another; he can in no wise approve of, but necessarily abhors sin, and is determined to punish whoever commits it. Whatever may be conceived to be *morally evil*, is at the greatest distance from the Deity: between whom, and *moral impurity*, there is no more affinity, than there is between light and darkness.

3. THE *Moral Governor* is *just and righteous*, or perfect *rectitude*: which may be deduced from the perfection of
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his nature. For if his nature be perfect, he must be *just* and *righteous*: for unrighteousness is the imperfection of an intelligent Being. "Is there unrighteousness with God? "God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" If the Divine Being were unrighteous, he would be utterly disqualified for a *Moral Governor*: there would then be no fit *Moral Governor* in the universe, and of consequence no *Moral Government*; and then no future judgment, rewards or punishments. Good men, who suffer from evil doers, would be left without a remedy, or the least prospect of redress, either here, or hereafter; for if the *Moral Governor* were unrighteous, to whom could they make their appeal? From every view of the subject, therefore, we are obliged to conclude that God is *righteous*.

THE Divine Being cannot do any thing but that which is *right* and *just*. Not because he is above all, and consequently accountable to no one for his conduct: nor because, *that*, is to be deemed right in him, which would be condemned, as wrong, in another: but because of the perfection of his nature. Some may cavil, and say, it is impossible for the Creator to do unjustly, or unrighteously by his creatures, whatever part he shall act by them, or in whatever manner he shall treat them, because of his absolute authority over them. To this it may be replied, that this objection destroys the very idea of *impartial Justice* and *Righteousness* in the Deity: for the very moment that *unrighteousness* ceaseth to be *unrighteousness*, *righteousness* ceaseth to be *righteousness*. There is *right* and *wrong* between the Creator and his creatures: and, as a superior may injure an inferior, so the Creator might injure his creatures,

creatures, were it not that the perfection of his nature forbid it; and that injury would be an act of injustice.

WOULD it be just and right for God to punish those who have committed no crime? or, doom to misery those who never sinned against him? or, to form a creature with keen sensibility, that he might afflict it with pain? Every intelligent mind must say it would not. We may therefore form ideas of *justice* and *injustice*, with respect to the conduct of the Creator towards his creatures. And his treatment of them, is strictly *just* and *righteous* in every point of view.

4. It will here naturally follow, that the *Moral Governor* must be *immutable*, in his nature and perfections, and in the resolutions of his will. As he is essentially *good*, *holy*, and *just*; he will continue to be unalterably so to all eternity. As he is immutably *holy*, *just*, and *good*, he cannot but adopt such measures as correspond with these perfections of his nature. And, having once adopted a plan of operation, he cannot change the scheme. Having in infinite wisdom made his election, he cannot recede or depart from it; for if this were not the case, it would prove him to be unstable, and his schemes to be defective. *Immutability* as much belongs to the *Moral Governor*, as *Goodness*; for *mutability* would prove his *Goodness* to be *imperfect*, or capable of degenerating.

5. It seems also reasonable to conclude, that the *Moral Governor* must be possessed of *Intelligence* to an infinite degree; for the sublime nature and services of his Office require it. The *Moral Governor* must be able to comprehend, at one glance, the *abilities* of all his rational creatures with the nicest exactness, under every circumstance of their existence

tence as *moral agents*; that he may prescribe suitable laws, such as they shall be qualified to obey, and institute proper sanctions to enforce the due observance of them. He must be able to comprehend all the springs of action, all the motives, influences, aims, and ends, attending the conduct of his rational creatures, that have any tendency to increase or diminish, their merit or demerit: that he may render to every one according to his works. He must have a perfect discernment of all Causes and their effects; and the influences that external objects, circumstances, and situations of life, inclinations, appetites and affections, will have upon his rational creatures, when combined in ten thousand different ways: that as a God of providence he may provide for every possible exigence, over-rule all things for his own glory, and the general good of the rational intelligent part of his creation, and carry on uninterruptedly, the grand scheme of his universal providence, consistent with his divine majesty, and exalted dignity, as the *supreme governor* of the universe.

To effect all this must require *infinite Intelligence*, for we cannot conceive that any measure of *intelligence* short of *infinite* should be equal to such an amazing undertaking, as the government of the universe.

S E C T. II.

On the Subjects of Moral Government.

HAVING briefly considered the MORAL GOVERNOR, we are naturally led to take notice of the fit and proper *subjects of moral government*, these must be what we call MORAL AGENTS, for no other can be proper *subjects of moral government* in the nature, and fitness of things.

To understand *moral agency*, it is necessary in the first place to define *morality*. *Morality* is usually and very justly defined to be that relation or proportion which actions bear to a given rule. A *moral agent*, is a being capable of performing those actions which have a *moral quality*; and which may be denominated *good*, or *ill*. An *agent* that is accountable to a superior for his conduct, and unto whom he is under a natural obligation to render obedience according to a certain rule prescribed.

1. If I mistake not, all agree, that a moral agent is possessed of a MORAL FACULTY, as it has been stiled, or *rationality*, or such a measure of *intelligence* as may be judged adequate, to apprehend *moral obligations*. For it is not reasonable to consider him as a *moral agent*, who has not a capacity to understand those precepts which are enjoined us, for the rule of our conduct. Therefore we justly conclude that the
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brute creation, and men in a state of idiotism, or distraction, are not the subjects of moral government: and when they do actions which are cognizable in others, they are not considered as fit objects of legal punishment. As they cannot perform that which is right, having no just idea of their duty; so they cannot be punished for their omission of it, being unconscious of any guilt.

2. EVERY *moral agent* must be endued with what some have called MORAL SENSE, which is a faculty whereby we discern that which is good, virtuous and amiable, in actions, manners and characters: and is a determination of the mind to approve those actions, manners and characters, which are good, virtuous, and amiable: with which *sense* the Author of nature has furnished his rational creatures in order to allure them to the practice of virtue.

A late celebrated Author has endeavoured to prove, that this MORAL SENSE is a peculiar *sense*, by which we have the ideas of these things: and it may be difficult to shew how some persons have attained these ideas, if it be not so; for they were never able to attain them by the deductions of reason and reflection, and yet have them, perhaps, as perfect as the most sagacious philosopher. For though it must be acknowledged that mankind have greatly impaired and injured this *moral sense* by the contraction of vicious habits, yet they can never totally eradicate it: the most profligate, have some ideas of the beauty and amiableness of virtue, and in spite of all their corrupt inclinations, they

feel a reverence for those characters which are truly good and virtuous: they naturally applaud the good, and condemn the evil actions of men. As the Apostle says, respecting the heathen world, who, "having not the law, are a law to themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while *accusing* or *else excusing* one another;"--- Rom. ii. 14, 15.

3. A CONSCIOUSNESS of good and evil, of praise and blame, of merit and demerit, of rewards and punishments, must also constitute an essential part in the character of a *moral agent*; nor can we figure to ourselves a subject of moral government devoid of this *Consciousness*. We can conceive of a *despotic, uncontrolled, compulsive government* without this *Consciousness* in the vassals governed by it; like the steerage of a ship, the direction of a machine, and the guidance of an horse, solely managed by the force of *mechanical powers*, as an helm, a weight, a spring, a lever and a rein. But whoever thought of directing the ox, the horse, the camel, or the elephant, evidently designed for the use of men, by moral precepts, mandates, &c. No one. But why not? Because they have no *Consciousness* of moral good and evil. What idea has the sagacious horse of good and evil, while pursuing his inclinations? Can you teach him to distinguish between his masters provender, and that which belongs to another, by verbal arguments, or reasoning with him? And if there be any thing like

like *Consciousness* in the horse, it has resulted as an effect from the use of the whip or spur, or some other instrument of corporal punishment; or if he be docile, from some gentler mode of mechanically breaking him in, to your purpose. But man has a *Consciousness* of right and wrong, arising from reflection: and this *Consciousness* is found in all men in proportion to the measure of their capacity, and their opportunities for receiving proper intelligence, without its being produced in them by sensible punishments, compulsions, or attractions. This one would think should convince the cruel despot of the impropriety and absurdity of his conduct, while he attempts to rule rational beings in the same manner as brute animals.

We need not multiply arguments to prove that human beings are possessed of this *Consciousness*, which the daily experience of every man evinces. No one will have it in his power to say in the last day of account, I had no ability to discriminate between good and evil; neither did my conscience inform me that I was doing wrong. For though it must be acknowledged that some of the human race have comparatively speaking but little knowledge of the supreme Being, and but little consciousness of right and wrong; yet it is self evident, that the very heathens following the light of nature, and the dictates of common sense, might have attained, in a much higher degree, the idea of their moral obligations to the Deity, had they exercised those powers and faculties with which he had endued

dued them. How inexcusable then are those who living in a land of light and liberty, and with an opportunity for perusing the sacred scriptures, and for hearing them explained; yet wilfully remain unacquainted with the rule of their duty!

If men abuse their *Consciousness* of good and evil by stupifying their minds, and hardening their hearts through a perseverance in sin, it may reasonably be expected that their wilful ignorance of duty will be so far from excusing them at the last day of account, that it will only augment their guilt and aggravate their condemnation. Though men may now stifle the voice of *conscience*; yet, in the awful day of judgment it will resume all its native vigor and activity, and be more dreadful than ten thousand witnesses against them. Yea its poignancy will heighten their every torment in that lake, where their worm dieth not and their fire his not quenched: and where, after millions of ages have rolled away, there will be no abatement of their undescribable anguish and misery. How much wiser a part would men act, if they would, now, before the shadow of death is stretched over them, and that night commences in which no man can work, listen to this friendly monitor, and adhere to its dictates, by *giving all diligence to work out their own Salvation with fear and trembling.*

4. A MORAL AGENT must also be in a state of FREEDOM or LIBERTY, in opposition to a *state of necessity*. Because a
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being that has ever so much *Intelligence* and *Consciousness*, except he be at *liberty to act for himself* cannot be deemed a *moral agent*, having properly speaking, no will of his own. Some have said, "It is in the nature of the will to act freely." I grant it. Yet there is an evident difference between the state of his will who delivers his purse to an Highwayman, to avoid being murdered, and the state of his will, who gives his purse to relieve a poor indigent fellow creature in deep distress. If you take away the *liberty of man*, (for I rather choose this mode of expression, than *liberty of the will*,) how can he be considered as an *accountable agent*? Yet it is evident that this *liberty* must be taken away in all those actions which are predetermined by a *foreign agent*, if that foreign agent has power to accomplish his purposes. Nor does it appear a matter of any consequence, whether the foreign agent secure the performance of those actions by *this* or the *other* mode of operation; whether by effectually drawing the will to a compliance, or by open force and violence; or whether he make use of instruments, and motives, which cannot be resisted; or work by a secret and invisible agency, which effectually prevails over him, to perform that which has been ordained for him, without his privity or consent. For if all his actions be predetermined, then he cannot act otherwise: and his *being willing*, or *not willing* amounts to nothing; for he who has decreed his actions, may as well work upon the *will*, as upon any other power of the mind. And admitting the *will* to be the first movement in the
soul

soul, that *agency* which inclines the *will* to choose such a course of life, may be considered as parallel to the weight or spring of a machine, which acts upon the first movement, and forces it round. And the *machine* may as well be called a *moral agent*, as a man under the above circumstances: for if any thing constitute *moral agency*, surely, it must be *liberty*, as it stands opposed to *necessity*. And to talk of a creature being a *moral*, or an *accountable agent*, and yet affirm that all his actions are predetermined, appears to be the grossest of all absurdities; and is an idea much fitter for the inhabitants of Bedlam, than for men in the sober use of their reasoning faculties. Man's actions are all predetermined, according to the Necessarian nor can he deviate one hairs breadth from the line prescribed him, in a single instance, being constantly acted upon by an omnipotent agency: and yet he is responsible for those very actions, the object of praise or blame, and will one day be condemned to eternal torments, for what he could not avoid!!! O! horrid idea! How is it possible that such incoherent and jarring ideas should ever be cherished in the mind of a Being, who lays any claim to rationality! But that such ideas should ever enter into the mind of a sober thinking man, is most astonishing!

5. A MORAL AGENT must also be a SELF-MOVING, SELF-ACTING AGENT; or one that has in himself the *principle* which *determines* him to act, i. e. under some restrictions, and in some measure. When I say *selfmoving*,
I do

not mean, that he possesses the same kind of independence, with Deity : but that he is endued with such a kind of *self-motion*, as may be conceived to exist in a creature, who is dependent on the Divine Creator for his existence, and the continuation of that existence, and who owes his daily sustentation to his sovereign will. Such a kind of *self-motion*, as perfectly coincides with the idea, of an entire dependence on the Deity, for his ability to exercise the *powers* of the body and the *faculties* of the mind : for I am well aware, that we can do nothing without his sustaining agency, in whom we live, move, and have our being. But I conceive, that it is one thing to rely on the Deity, for the support, and sustentation of our existence, and the activity, and ability, of our corporeal and mental faculties ; and quite another, to depend upon him, for the *manner* in which, we use, and exercise those faculties.

The Divine Being has given us existence, and invested us with various powers and faculties; and he supports this wonderful frame in a condition for acting, but leaves it to our option, to make what use of those faculties, and powers we think proper ; only with this restriction, that if we use them consistently with the will of the Law-giver, he has promised to reward our obedience with his approbation ; but if we pervert them to sin, he has threatened to punish our rebellion with his displeasure. Consequently, while the divine Being continues his supporting agency, man enjoys his *self determining power* : yet not so absolutely, but that he

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is constantly liable to the controlling agency of the Deity: though, while he is under that controlling agency, his actions cannot properly be deemed moral; as they do not originate in himself, but in the absolute determination, and irresistible influence of the Supreme Being.

How can man be stiled a *moral agent*, without this *self determining power*? How can a man be deemed *accountable* for his actions, if he be not permitted to direct *them himself*? For, as no one would wish to be responsible for the actions of another; so, common sense dictates, that it would be unjust to make man answerable for actions that he is not permitted to direct. But, if man has not a *self determining power*, he is not suffered to direct his own actions, and therefore common sense would say, he ought not to be amenable for them, any more than if they were the actions of some other person: for so in fact, they are, and he himself is nothing more than an engine, or an instrument. Should any one have it in his power, to compel the will of another to choose such a line of conduct, as he shall appoint, the other, not having ability to resist, or make a contrary choice, cannot possibly, under such circumstances, be deemed a *moral agent*, nor his actions *moral actions*.

I can form no ideas of a *moral agent* under the law of *absolute immutable necessity*: for he that is under such a law can have *no will of his own*: for though his will may choose *freely*, yet that *freedom of choice* being
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the effect of *necessity*, is the same, in my apprehension, as though he had no will of his own. He is not a *selfdetermining agent*; but *necessity determines* for him: or in the language, of Mr. EDWARDS, *His will is infallibly determined by those circumstances which the divine appointment has unalterably fixed*. Could the doctrine of *infallible immutable necessity* be established, I should at once give up the idea of *moral-agency*; because I am altogether unable to reconcile two such opposite ideas. I therefore conclude, that a *selfdetermining power* characterizes the subjects of *moral government*; nor is it possible, in my opinion, that any being should be the subject of this *government*, who is not possessed of such a power; or whose *determining principle* to action, is not an inherent *principle*. For if the *principle*, that *determines* him to act, be not in himself, but in a foreign agent, how can he, in strict justice and equity, be accountable for his conduct; any more than the maniac for shedding innocent blood. How is it possible in the nature of things that he should be responsible for his conduct; or the subject of praise or blame, who has not this principle inherent; but depends upon another for the direction of his every action?

Mr. EDWARDS, in his Treatise on the Will, reprobates the idea of a self determining power in man, as if it amounted to a contradiction in its consequences: and he quibbles about the wills determining itself, or its own free

acts, saying. "If the will determines its own free acts, the
 "soul determines all the free acts of the will, in the exercise
 "of a power of willing and choosing; it determines them of
 "choice; it determines its own acts, by choosing its own acts.
 "If the will determines the will then choice orders and deter-
 "mines the choice, and acts of choice are subject to the
 "decision, and follow the conduct of other acts of choice.
 "And therefore if the will determines all its own free
 "acts, then every free act of choice is determined by a
 "preceding act of choice, choosing that act." And so on,
 ad infinitum. "Which brings us directly to a contradic-
 "tion: for it supposeth an act of the will before the first
 "act in the whole train directing and determining the rest;
 "or a free act of the will before the first free act of the will,
 "Or else we must come at last to an act of the will deter-
 "mining the consequent acts, wherein the will is not self
 "determined, and so is not a free act." And if the first act
 be not free, the consequent ones cannot. (P. 46. 47.)
 If this argument be meant to overturn the notion of the
 wills directing itself, it may perhaps be right: and it may
 be more proper to say, that the soul in all its acts, is *self*
determined, than to say the will determines itself: but if
 it was intended to set aside the idea of a *self determining*
principle in man, and to place that *principle* in a *foreign*
agent, then it leads to a contradiction; for it would prove
 that God himself is not a *self determining agent*, which may
 be seen, by *applying the argument to him, and the resolutions*
 of his will. Alas! Into what absurdities are even good
 men, insensibly betrayed, when they have recourse to
 sophistry, to support a favorite tenet!

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In the foregoing argument, does not Mr. EDWARDS therefore take a proposition for granted, which he should first have proved, viz. that a *moral agent*, cannot act without first being acted upon? If he cannot begin an action, then he is not an *agent*; for every agent can begin an action, though he should not be able to direct his action. But why should not the *moral agent* be able to direct an action, as he is endued with reason and conscience? For my own part, I can see no reason why an *active being*, should not be able to act of itself, save only, that this idea militates against the doctrine of necessity. For every living creature can act of itself, from the crawling reptile to the highest intelligence. If we take a view of man in his original state, as created with various properties, inclinations, passions, and appetites, with an ability to exert, or exercise them as occasion might offer, having understanding for his guide, there does not appear, in the nature of things, any necessity for his being acted upon, to enable him to act: for he was made capable of acting: and if capable, why not act at his own pleasure? But our opponents lay a stress upon the *peculiarity* of action, on acting in a particular manner, and *why* he exerts *such* an act, and not *another*. They seem obliged to confess, that he may act of himself; but not in a *particular* manner: for there must be some *reason* or *cause* for this *manner* of action. There is no necessity for supposing that a man acts without a reason for acting; though in some instances his actions do not appear to be
the result

result of deliberation, or the effect of consideration. But, even, supposing he should act without reason at any time; would not that act be a particular act? If he should repeat his exertions; would not the second act, be a particular act? I do not say that it would fall out according to some prior decree: nor is there any need of this. Let it first be proved that there is such a decree existing. It is sufficient for our purpose that he is capable of acting as a rational being, with design, so as to accomplish his own wishes, without being put into motion or directed by another, and that GOD is able to over rule his actions, to subserve his own glory. For if he act at all, every act must be a particular one, or of a particular kind. Which abundantly shews the weakness of our opponents, in attempting to lay a stress on the peculiarity of actions,

Man did not exist without a cause; but having received his existence, the cause of action is to be sought for in that existence, and in the nature and manner of it. He is endowed with powers, and only wants an opportunity, or an occasion, to display them. He possesses reason and reflection, and there are numberless objects, on which he may exercise them: but shall we attribute causality to those objects? We might as well say that a Bowling Green and a good set of Bowls are the cause of a man's bowling: or that a Race Course is the cause of his running. Inclination is the cause, and these are opportunities only.

THE will is a faculty of the soul, it is not properly an agent, but the property of an agent. What is it that exercises this property? Is it not the agent in whom the property inheres, even the soul? Or is it rational to suppose, that the property existing in one active agent, should only be capable of being exercised, by the agency of another? Yet so it must be, if the *soul cannot will of itself*, without the interposition of some other agent. But cannot the soul, which is an active agent, act of itself, and from itself, if it be supported in existence, and in a state fit for action? Does it at all stand in need of some *foreign agency*, to give it motion? And can it not act, if that *foreign agency* be withdrawn? If not, wherein does it differ from a machine? Do the *surrounding objects* act upon the soul with an *impulsive agency*, as Mr. EDWARDS has represented it, in his Treatise on the Will? For instance, does a Nobleman's Estate act upon the miser, and cause him to desire after it? That Estate has no active agency in itself, that I know of; but is merely a passive object. Suppose the desires of the mind should go out after money, and not land: would a parcel of fine land, then, answer its desires, or cause the will to seek after the possession of it? The fact appears to be this, the covetous mind perceiving an object suitable to gratify itself, wills to make use of those means, for the attainment of it, which the understanding suggests, as the most fit and likely to succeed. The impulsive motive is not in the estate; but in the mind that covets after it: the determining principle to those actions, which
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are meant to procure the enjoyment, are in the covetous mind, and not in the Nobleman's Estate: for another man might see the same object, and have a just idea of its real value, without either desiring after it, or willing to use the means of possessing it: which in my apprehension clearly proves that the acting motive is in the man's mind, and not in the Nobleman's Estate: and it is puerile to say it moved the covetous man's mind to will the enjoyment of it; because, that would be to ascribe an agency to that which is in itself wholly passive. The agency which determines the will, is in man's self; it is self-love.

MR. EDWARDS insists strongly upon it, that, if the soul, or the will, as he expresses it, determines itself to will, that must be by a prior determination, or resolution of the will. But by what resolution of the will does the Nobleman's Estate determine the will of an *agent* to make it an object of his choice, if that agent have not the principle which determines his own will, or rather his own actions? He cannot well fly off, and say, the will is determined by the agency of some external, self-determining agent, for his argument proves that there is no such agent, existing in the universe. If the principle, which determines our actions, be not in ourselves, it must be in some other; for there is such a principle some where, or else no actions could be performed. This principle is not in inanimate, insensible, inert matter; for that has not the power of motion; agency does not belong to it in any view: and
it cannot

it cannot act upon other objects, of any kind, except by attraction, repulsion, &c. and that only on matter congenial to itself. Is *this Agency*, then, in our neighbours? for they have the power of using arguments, and of laying before us the consequences of good and bad actions: but if it were so, and an effectual agency, it would be a very happy circumstance, to many a thoughtless youth: yet experience proves, that *this Agency* can effect nothing: and every man is conscious in himself, that he may act just as he pleases, after all the instructions, and admonitions that can be given by others; and that his acting entirely depends on self-love.---Nothing else can determine the Will. For if you cannot persuade him, that acting in such a particular manner, will some how or other tend to his own good: or else, if a wish to please you, do not amount to an imaginary good, you will not be able to prevail: and for this plain reason, *the principle* which *determines* him to act, is in himself, and not in you. Besides, if I were to adopt common sense for my guide, I should conclude, that a man has so far *the principle* that *determines* him to action, in himself, that he may, and can, shut his ears, and eyes, against all the reasons you can offer, or quit your company, and so prevent your arguments from having any influence on his mind. Nor is it in your power to open these organs of intelligence with effect: which fully proves, that the *principle* which *determines* a man to act, is not in his neighbours.

Is *this principle* then, which determines our actions, in the Divine Being? I at once acknowledge, that he can work all things after the counsel of his own will; and that he does what he will in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say to him, what dost thou? But it will be necessary for us, to enquire seriously into this matter, and view the consequences that may arise, on either side of the question. If we suppose that the *principle*, which *determines* our actions, is in God, and not in us: the consequence is plainly this, we have no *determining principle* in ourselves: and if we have not, we do not, we cannot, *determine* any action, and by consequence we are merely *passive instruments*, to fulfil his pleasure. He that has our *determining principle* is holy, therefore while *determined* by him, our actions must have been holy, nor could they have been otherwise: for it is impossible that He should have *determined* our Wills to choose actions of an opposite nature, or of the vicious kind. If therefore our *determining principle*, had been with God, sin could not have entered into the world; except by a Divine Agency: creatures, having no *determining principle* in themselves, could not have *determined* to transgress the divine laws: and the *holiness* and *purity* of the Divine Being must have prevented Him from *determining their Wills*, to choose the way of sin. This may be seen, in the regular movements of those Bodies, which are immediately under his directing agency, the sun, moon, and stars; for if he had loved confusion, better than order, he had ample room to display

display it in the planetary worlds. But as all his works, declare his love of order, we may rest assured, that, had rational creatures been directed by him, they could never have swerved from the way of holiness; for that is order, and sin, is disorder, and confusion. Sin could not have entered into the world, except by a divine agency, if the *principle* that *determines* our actions be in him: but to suppose that sin entered by His Agency, is, in my view of things, one of the grossest of all absurdities. What, shall the MORAL GOVERNOR be the efficient cause of *moral evil*? Horrid idea! Nothing less than blasphemy! It is to make him, indeed, the father of lies, with a witness! It is to make him, the author of that which he hates, of that which dishonors him, and of that, which he must necessarily punish!

If the *principle* that *determines* our actions be in God: then our actions are not *moral*; they are with respect to us neither *morally good*, nor *morally evil*: we could not, under such circumstances, be in a *state of probation*: for that supposes a person's acting for himself: he that does not act for himself, is no more than an instrument; and the vice, or virtue of his actions, would be that of anothers, and not his own, and, most surely, *it would belong to him*, who had his *determining principle*, without whose sovereign will, he could neither act, nor forbear to act. From these considerations, I am led to conclude, that man's *determining principle* to action, is not in God. The very nature

of the connection, between the *Moral Governor*, and the subjects of his government, forbids, that their *determining principle* to action, should be in him, who is the *Moral Governor*. What a strange idea must it conjure up in the human mind, to see the *Moral Governor* possessing the *principle*, that *determines* the actions of his subjects! Common sense says, that, it by no means becomes the *Moral Governor*, to interfere with the actions of his subjects, by any other mode, but by that of authority, i. e. to give laws, to deal out rewards and punishments, according to their deserts: and, that the moment he exerts an *active compulsive agency* over their actions, *Moral Government* ceases of course. The Divine Being must then assume another character, and his creature must stand in a different situation, to that of a *moral agent*.

From the foregoing arguments, I hope, it will appear clear to the understanding of every unprejudiced reader, that the soul of man determines its own volitions; (notwithstanding, what Mr. EDWARDS has asserted to the contrary, playing upon the words, *willing to will*, and endeavouring to hold up the absurd idea of the wills determining its own volitions :) and that the *principle* by which every man *determines* his actions, is *vested in himself*, and not in another. Nor can we consider him, as *an accountable moral agent*, on any other ground. Neither do I think, that this is destroyed in the economy of salvation. God does not infringe on this privilege, when he renovates the
 hearts

hearts of men : for he only changes the *principle* by which they *determine* their future conduct ; but does not divest them of their *self determining power*. The highest intelligences in glory have this power in themselves : and though they be not liable to sin, by reason of the good pleasure of God, yet they have the *principle* that *determines* their actions *within themselves* : and as they cannot lose their *holiness*, that will ever actuate and determine them to render obedience.

S E C T. III.

On, *Moral Government*.



THE divine Being has various ways by which he *governs* his creatures, and directs their motions. The whole of which, may, probably, be comprehended under these three heads, viz. *Government by Agency* ; *Government by Instinct* ; and *Government by Law*.

GOVERNMENT

GOVERNMENT BY AGENCY includes in it all those exertions of Divine Power, by which the Deity directs the movements and actions of his creatures, in that particular course, which his infinite wisdom has chosen and appointed for them. And it may be supposed, that God exercises this kind of *government* over all his creatures, in some degree at least : but, more especially over the inanimate parts of the creation. That the Divine Being possesses the power of an *universal agency*, over all his creatures, and all their actions, cannot be doubted : for *he does what he will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand.*---By this agency we may suppose that he directs the various motions and revolutions of the planetary worlds. ‡ The sun, moon, and stars, are not only preserved in existence, by the word of his power, but guided in all their motions, whether circular, elliptical, or periodical, by his omnipotent agency : and they never deviate from that course, which infinite wisdom

‡ The supposition, that he has so constructed the Universe, that one part is so connected with another, and every part so connected with the whole, as to move together like one grand, complex, and vast machine, to which he has given perpetual motion ; so that without his interposition, it necessarily performs its revolutions with the nicest regularity and order, does not destroy, but strengthen the force of the argument : for an active agency has given motion to this wonderful System, and has directed all its operations and movements, according to the most perfect rules of Divine Art. And who that is capable of reflection, does not clearly perceive that if the Almighty had seen fit to govern mankind as he does the Universe, they never could have swerved from his laws.

wisdom has appointed: if they should, confusion and disorder would inevitably ensue, and the harmony of the spheres, would be immediately destroyed. We may also suppose that this *active agency* is concerned in directing the seasons of the year, the stormy winds, the vapours, rain, hail, and snow, thunder, and lightning, tempests, inundations, and earthquakes; and all the events depend thereon. He maketh summer and winter, seed time and harvest. † All these things depend on his *active agency*. His Agency is also concerned in the production of the animal and rational worlds, from the crawling reptile, to the exalted monarch: for in *Him*, as their efficient cause, and constant preserver, all live, move, and have their being. And whenever he pleases, he can exert his Divine Agency on all his intelligent creatures, so as to turn their hearts at his pleasure; and to renovate them, when fallen from their

† If we ascribe these things to second causes, yet so long as God is the first cause, and directs second causes, it amounts to the same thing, as if they were directed by his immediate agency. For if twenty stones were set up in such a direction, that if the throwing down of the first, would be the cause of the seconds falling, and the second, the third, and so on, through the whole series, to the twentieth: it is the same thing, whether a man go, and with his hands, immediately overturn the twentieth, or cause it to fall by ever turning the first, or any one of the intermediate stones, through the whole series.

“ From Natures Chain whatever Link you strike,

“ Tenth, or ten thousandth, breaks the Chain alike.”

POPE.

their original perfection: which *Agency* he exerts on all his people, before he brings them to glory.

Some parts also, of the conduct of good men, and the restraints on that of the wicked, may be attributed to a Divine Agency: especially on extraordinary occasions, when God has wonderfully signalized himself as the deliverer of his Saints. EZEKIEL says---“ So the
 “ spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went
 “ in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit: but the
 “ hand of the Lord was strong upon me. EZE. 3. 14. PAUL was caught up to the third heavens. The spirit suffered not Paul and his companions to go into Bethinia. And in a vision, he was called to go into Macedonia. Acts 16. 7, 8, 9. Philip was sent to meet the Eunuch- and was afterwards caught away by the spirit of God. Acts 8. 26, 39. Abimelek was not suffered to injure Abraham, Gen. 20. 6. Laban was not suffered to hurt Jacob. Ibid. 31. 24. Balaam was not suffered to curse Israel. Numb. 22. When Israel had passed through the red sea, they sang and said. “ Fear and dread shall fall upon
 “ them by the greatness of thine arm: they shall be
 “ as still as a stone till they people pass over, O Lord,
 “ till the people pass over which thou hast redeemed.” Exo. 15. 16. The fear of the Lord fell on the people of Israel, and they came out with one consent to follow Saul their new made king. 1 Sam. 11. 7. When Jonathan and his armour bearer smote the Philistians,
 their

their swords were turned one against another. Sam. 14. 15. 16. When Gideon with his little host overthrew the midianites, they slew themselves, and Gideon and his men had little else to do but look on and blow with their trumpets. Judg. 7. 20. 22.

BUT besides these more extraordinary evidences of a *Divine Agency* actuating mankind: we may suppose that *this Agency* is exerted many times in a more secret way: both in restraining from evil, and in stimulating to that which is good; as may be concluded from the promise of God to his people Israel. "Neither shall any
" desire thy Land when thou shalt go up to appear before
" the Lord thy God, thrice in the year." Exo. 34. 24.

As the Lord works upon the minds of men by an immediate Agency, so, he works upon them by a *mediate Agency*, by means which cannot fail to produce the proper effect. Such a kind of *Agency* we may suppose, that to have been, which induced *Ahab* to go up to Ramoth Gilead, that he might fall there. The Lord suffered a lying spirit to go forth into all his prophets. The Lord could have effected this without the intervention of such a spirit if he had seen meet: but he often makes use of secondary causes, to effect his purposes: in which his *Agency* is frequently hid from the view of men, who perceive not his over-ruling providence.

THE question then to be debated is this. What has this *Divine Agency* to do in *Moral Government*? They who affirm, that all the actions of men are directed by an influx from the Deity, make this the *sole spring* of *Moral Government*: but if all our actions be directed by an influx from the Deity, there could be no necessity for written Laws and precepts, prescribing rules for our conduct; any more, than for giving verbal rules, and laws, to the sun, moon, and stars: for it must be self evident, that so long as that *influx* continues to act upon man, other laws would be in vain; that *influx* would be the law: † as the *Divine Agency* upon the inanimate parts of the creation, is the Law by which they move. This Agency, exerted in various ways, or the divine purposes by which it is directed, is called, the law of nature: from which the inanimate parts of the creation never err: unless the Deity on some extraordinary occasions is pleased to display his sovereign power by inverting, as it were, the order of nature. As when the sun stood still upon Gibeon, in the days of Joshua:—When the sun's shadow went ten degrees backward on the dial of Ahaz, in the Reign of Hezekiah:—When it was eclipsed at our Saviour's crucifixion, &c. —By the laws of nature, fire will consume: but the three Jewish worthies felt no harm in *Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace*;

† If the Divine Being govern his rational creatures by external motives which they cannot resist, it as fully supercedes the use of the Law, as a Divine Influx: for those motives would be the Law to direct their conduct, and given precepts would be useless.

furnace; for by a divine interposition, that devouring element became harmless to these pious men. Thus I have represented my ideas of Government by Agency; and shall now proceed to the consideration of Government by *Instinct*.

2. GOVERNMENT BY INSTINCT is the direction of brute animals, by their respective natures, properties, sensations, inclinations and appetites; with which they were purposely endued in their formation for that end. When the Divine Being formed the brute creation, he endued every particular species with a distinct nature, peculiar properties, inclinations, and appetites, exactly suitable to that mode of life, or those employments, for which every particular species was primarily intended. This *Instinct*, particular *Nature*, or *Disposition*, is the law by which the actions of every different animal is directed: and so long as the brute follows its original inclinations, and acts agreeably to those first appetites, implanted in it, it acts consistently with the law of its nature. By these means the Divine Being governs the animal world, and not by Agency, as he does the sun, moon, and stars, the winds, and waves, &c. except on some important occasions, as with respect to the Lions, when the prophet *Daniel* was in their den; — to the Asps, when *Balaam* was journeying upon him to curse Israel: — to the Quails, when Israel lusted after flesh in the wilderness, &c. For in these instances, a Divine Agency was employed, to direct

those animals to act sometimes above, and sometimes contrary to the dictates of their respective natures.

3. GOVERNMENT BY LAW is the ruling of intelligent creatures by precepts, enforced by sanctions viz. Promises, and Threatenings, Rewards, and Punishments. In this kind of *Government* the subject is left to his choice, whether he will obey, and receive the promised good; or disobey, and suffer the threatened evil. For laws have no compulsive Agency, by which they can force men to render obedience. They are only addressed to our *hopes*, and *fears*; and if any man be so case hardened, as to throw off all dread of punishment, or so far an infidel, as to discredit their sanction, he is then at liberty to act as he pleases; viz. in respect of any compulsive influence from the Law; as it has no longer any binding restraint on his conduct: nevertheless it will assuredly condemn him for his disobedience; and both human and divine justice, will faithfully execute the sentence of condemnation passed upon the delinquent.

Having taken this cursory view of the various kinds of DIVINE GOVERNMENT, it will be proper to enquire, which of these is MORAL GOVERNMENT? Whether government by Agency, government by Instinct, or government by Law?

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IT is most rational to suppose, that the Divine Being, rules all his creatures by that kind of *Government*, which is best adapted to their different natures, and capacities. The *inanimate* parts of the creation being *passive*, are properly *governed* by an *active Agency*: for there does not appear to us any probable mode of directing them, but this. And this kind of *Government*, as it is the most absolute, so it is the most certain to be obeyed; as the subjects of it can never deviate from the will of their Lord.

Mere Brutes are properly governed by *Instinct*, or those *sensations, inclinations, and appetites*, which God has implanted in them, for the purpose of directing their conduct, or respective modes of life. The subjects of this mode of *Government* are more liable to swerve from the laws of nature, than those of that by *Agency*: for by the interposition of mankind, some of the brute species, have been trained up to receive new appetites, or dispositions: and they have been taught to do things which they would not have done, had they been left entirely to the dictates of their respective natures.

Rational Beings are governed conformably to *Reason*; and *prescribed laws* appear to be the most fit, and proper mode of directing their conduct in life. Had Reason, therefore, never been corrupted, mankind would have acted rationally, or in a manner agreeable

agreeable to the rules of *right reason*. They would then have seen it their indispensable duty and interest to have loved the Lord their God with all their heart, and their Neighbour as themselves. But if reason be once depraved, rational Beings become liable to swerve from the path of duty and interest, as they still continue to follow their old guide, though now in a state of delusion, without suspecting its incapacity to shew them the way clearly, in which they ought to go. Nor can we expect it should be otherwise. As they are possessed of reason, it is natural for them to choose that which they account the chief good: if reason through blindness, mistake an evil for that good, we cannot but suppose, they will choose the evil, and refuse the good, which they account an evil. As reason is their guide, they will naturally act according to its dictates: and when through depravity it is unable to discern either the propriety of the law, or the duties which it requires, we may suppose, that the sensitive passions and appetites will then govern and direct their conduct instead of the law, or right reason: and by consequence they will become slaves to their own lusts. Sense will then guide the helm, and understanding will be employed only as a servant to devise ways for accomplishing the desires of the flesh, or for attaining the objects of their wishes; but will not be suffered to direct those desires, or wishes, to proper objects. Hence it appears, that those Beings, which are governed by Law, are most liable to be turned aside from the path of duty, by any Agent who

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is able to impose on the understanding, or has sufficient address to deceive the *Moral Agent* with the appearance of good for that which is real.

Under the *first mode of Government*, the subjects are not liable to any kind of irregularity whatever, being directed by an *omnipotent impulsive Agency*, which cannot be resisted.—The subjects of the *second form of Government*, are liable to some irregularities; as they are guided partly by Agency, and partly by Instinct.—But the subjects of the *last form of Government*, are the most liable to be warped, or turned aside, as they are governed by Law, and left at liberty to act for themselves, and to follow the dictates of Reason, and Inclination. And yet it is evident that *this kind of Government*, only, is suitable to the nature of a *rational Agent*: for if he were to be governed wholly by Agency, why give him life? And if by Instinct, why give him reason?

It is this *last kind of Government*, which I call, MORAL GOVERNMENT: and the two former do not appear to belong to it, in any sense whatever: for MORAL GOVERNMENT is a government by Law. But the two former are those by Agency and Instinct: for whoever thought of prescribing laws, and precepts, to direct the motions of inanimate matter; or the conduct of brute animals, which have no capacity to understand any laws, but those implanted in their natures, viz. Sensations, appetites, and inclinations. Their distinct natures are their laws of action, and in general they

they act conformably to those laws. If the Divine Being had *governed* mankind by an *active Agency*, as he does the planetary worlds, they would never have deviated from the path, or line of conduct appointed for them. Had he thought fit to have *governed* them by their nature, still supporting that nature by his omnipotent Agency, as he does those of Beasts, Birds, Fishes, &c. whose natures are not liable to be changed, (except perhaps in a very few instances;) then mankind would have continued in much the same condition, as when they were created at first. But it must appear self-evident to every impartial mind, that if they had been governed after this manner, they would have been no more *Moral Agents*, than Beasts, Birds, &c. And therefore not accountable for their conduct.

When the Divine Being created man, He created him a *Moral Agent*, capable of obeying, or disobeying; and placed him in a STATE OF PROBATION. This was not the case with the planetary worlds; nor with mere animal existences; for they were never left to determine for themselves. But, if the Divine Being saw fit to create a *probationary Moral Agent*, he was under the necessity of creating him with full liberty to obey, or disobey, at his pleasure. For if the Divine Being had exercised an *active Agency* upon him, any further than was necessary for his continuation in a capacity for acting freely of himself, *Moral Agency* would have been unavoidably destroyed. For if a man be impelled to action by an *irresistible Agency*, he

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is no longer governed as a *rational Being*; but like the *planetary worlds*. It is in vain to object, that the Divine Being *impels* and *governs* mankind solely by *motives*, which they cannot resist: for if they cannot, they are just in the same situation with a machine, which cannot resist the spring, or weight, that gives it motion; or the stars, which cannot resist that *omnipotent Agency* which at first impelled them into motion: for, as they depended on that Agency for every motion; so would man have depended upon those motives, (which are said to be the cause of his acting,) in every part of his conduct: nor could he have acted without them, any more than the planetary worlds could move, without first being acted upon.

MAN under such circumstances would be nothing more than a Machine, and therefore, not an accountable Agent, i. e. not a *Subject of Moral Government*. But I presume, it has been sufficiently proved that man is something more than a mere Machine; and that he possesses the *principle* that *determines* his own actions in himself. If the *principle* that *determines* man to act, be in himself, then *external motives* may be resisted by him: he may turn away from them, shut up the Avenues of sense against them, and resolve to act contrary to their *Influence*. And this must be the situation of every *Moral Agent*; for he that does not enjoy *this liberty* is not a *Moral Agent*; i. e. if the want of it arise from external causes only.

MORAL GOVERNMENT then, is a *Government by Laws and Precepts*, and not either by *Agency* or *Influence*, nor by what some call *Motives*. For if the Divine Being had governed mankind by *Agency*, then we may be assured, that they would never have swerved from the path of *rectitude* and *holiness*, as He himself is perfectly holy: he is *holiness* in the abstract; and therefore could not have exerted an *Agency* that would have determined them to the practice of vice.—Had he governed them by *Influence* they must have trodden in the paths of *holiness* and *virtue*. —Therefore, when we perceive them to have acted diametrically opposite to the Divine Legislator, and to his revealed Will, and in open rebellion against Himself, we are constrained to believe, that he has directed them by *Laws*: and not by *irresistable Agency, Influence, or Motives*. That they have been left to their choice, whether they will obey, or disobey those *Laws*. And that they have full power to take which path they please, without being prevented by divine interference; any further, than his giving them *Laws* with their annexed sanctions, viz. Promises and Threatenings; his supporting them by his *Agency*, by which they are upheld in existence; and his restraining them by his *providence*, by which they are in some instances, perhaps, prevented going to those lengths in wickedness and riot, to which their dispositions would otherwise lead them.

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FROM the foregoing Observations on MORAL GOVERNMENT, we may therefore reasonably conclude, that the Divine Being perfectly performs the part of a MORAL GOVERNOR, when he causeth his laws to be promulgated to his subjects; when he appointeth Agents to instruct them in the knowledge of their duty; when he favoereth them with that light of nature, reason, and conscience, which is sufficient to illuminate their minds into the knowledge of their moral obligations; and when he rewardeth the righteous, and punisheth the wicked. Nor can we conceive, that any thing more than this is requisite, to the due administration of MORAL GOVERNMENT.

SECT.

S E C T. IV.



An attempt to reconcile God's moral and providential Government, shewing how DIVINE PROVIDENCE is concerned in the government of the MORAL WORLD, and yet not the cause of MORAL EVIL.

AS MORAL GOVERNMENT is a Government by Law, without the exertion of *Agency* or *Influence*, to direct the conduct of those who are the subjects of it. So, PROVIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT is conducted by *Agency*, and *Influence*; and is a SOVEREIGN UNCONTROLLED AUTHORITY, exercised over all the creatures, and all their actions. This is fully and sublimely expressed, in the words of *Nebuchadnezzar*, when his understanding was restored to him, after he had been driven out from men to dwell with the beasts of the field; Dan. 4. 34. 35.—“ And I blessed the
“ most high, and praised and honored him that liveth
“ for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion,
“ and

“ and his kingdom from generation to generation. And
 “ all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing ;
 “ and he doth according to his will in the army of hea-
 “ ven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none
 “ can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou ? ”

As *Providential Government* is in some respect or other, concerned in every possible event, hence some may conclude, that it necessarily clashes with *Moral Government*, and confounds the character of the MORAL GOVERNOR, with that of an *absolute monarch*. To set this matter in as clear a light as possible, shall be the business of this section.

IT has been objected against MORAL GOVERNMENT, that for the Divine Being to make a creature, and then leave him at full liberty to act for himself, without any control but that of the Law, would be to reflect dishonor on the Creator ; as it sets aside the directing hand of a DIVINE PROVIDENCE.—Also, that it seems incompatible with infinite wisdom to loose the reins of Government, and to suffer his creatures to act according to their own freewill, while himself remains, as it were, *an unconcerned Spectator* of what they are doing. Were this a fair representation of MORAL GOVERNMENT, still the argument might be retorted upon our opponents, with advantage ; for, to suppose that the Divine Being has by his *own Agency*, and *Influence*, caused his creatures to sin against himself, contrary to their nature ; or that he has *laid* such
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temptations in their way, that they must inevitably stumble and fall; reflects much more dishonor on the Divine Character, than that of *governing* them wholly by *Laws*, and leaving them to act according to the freedom of their own will. It is evident, that the angels who kept not their standing, but rebelled against the most high, must have been left at *liberty*, or else they could not have been in a *state of probation*; for, to represent creatures in a *probationary state*, and yet at the same time, declare them to be irresistably acted upon, that they might fall, as they did, is repleat with absurdity, contradiction, and blasphemy; and it paints the Deity, as partial, changefull, and unjust. Had it been inconsistent with infinite wisdom to have left his creatures to act freely; then, it must have been equally so to have placed them in a state of *probation*: yet it is an indisputable fact that he did this: and therefore, it could not have been incompatible with infinite wisdom to have left them at liberty to act freely, while that wisdom saw meet to place them in a *state of trial*, with an intention to prove them, whether they would continue obedient.

BUT the Almighty has not loosened any *rein of Government*, befitting the Ruler of the universe to hold; for while he preserves his authority as a *Moral Governor*, ruling his creatures by *equitable Laws*, and not by *compulsive Agency*, he maintains his *sovereign right of control*, over all the works of his hands, and accomplishes
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all the good pleasure of his will. Nor is he an *unconcerned spectator* of the conduct of his rational creatures; as he takes cognizance of all their actions, and marks the measure of guilt or merit belonging to every action, weighing the same in the impartial scales of unerring justice, so that he may finally reward every one according to his works. And does not this appear a much more congruous part, than that of a constant instigator to evil? (as our opponents represent him;) or an *absolute* predeterminator of all those events, which even disgrace human nature itself, and which must much more debase our conception of the Divine Being, on the supposition of his having positively predetermined them, and by *his Agency, and Influence*, brought them to pass!

THE PROVIDENCE of God, notwithstanding, is undoubtedly concerned in all the transactions of time, and performs various things for the good of mankind, and for the benefit of the universe: yet in perfect conformity to *Moral Government*.

WE will first consider, what DIVINE PROVIDENCE has to do, in those events which are sinful: for I cannot suppose, that any one will be able to prove, that the *providence* of God is unconcerned in these events: for though it be not the cause of them, yet, it must have some concern about them, which may be represented under the following heads.

I. DIVINE

1. DIVINE PROVIDENCE may be supposed to be concerned about *sinful events*, so far, as to *suffer* them to take place. For no event can happen, except the Divine Being *suffer* it: were he to command the contrary, or will it to be otherwise; what power, or what Agency in the universe, could bring that event to pass? Has any one an arm like God? Or who can contend with the Almighty? How easily could he have prevented the fall of Angels, and the defect-ion of Mankind, had it been agreeable to his infinite wisdom. But he *suffered* both those events: and his *suffering* them, may be considered as an act of *his Providence*. This *Sufferance of Providence*, was not the effect of a supine inattention to his creatures, and their works; but strictly conformable to his fixed, determined, and wise design, in having created them *probationers*. And has not infinite wisdom over-ruled these events to his own glory, and the welfare of his people, in the stupendous scheme of redemption? A mystery, which the highest intelligences adore in silence. But, does this act of *Divine Providence* militate, in any one instance, against *his Moral Government*? For my own part, I cannot perceive even the shadow of an objection.

2. DIVINE PROVIDENCE may be supposed to be concerned in over-ruling the sin of Angels, and of our first Parents, and indeed of all mankind, to answer
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some great and good purpose, Thus the Divine Being might suffer angels to sin, from a determination to over-rule that event, for the display of his Justice.—He might suffer our first parents to transgress his covenant, that he might display his clemency, his mercy, and his grace, and to heighten the happiness of the Heirs of Glory.—He might suffer the Patriarch Joseph to be sold into Egypt, by his Brethren, that he might make provision for good old Jacob, and his numerous offspring.—He might suffer him to be cast into prison, at the instigation of a lewd woman, that he might advance him in Pharoah's court.—He might suffer Pharoah to rebel against his word, and to harden his heart against his Judgments, that he might make his power known, display his sovereign uncontrolled authority over all his creatures, and prove himself to be what he is, the TRUE GOD, the SUPREME GOVERNOR of the universe.—He might suffer the Jews to crucify his only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that he might display his great love to sinners, redeem them from all iniquity, and bring about their everlasting salvation; and thereby manifest the glory of his holiness, justice, mercy, and grace.

If the Divine Being *suffer* any of his creatures to sin against him, we may suppose that *His Providence* is concerned so to over-rule, and order it, that it shall be the means to bring about some important good: and that in the end, sin itself shall be made subservient to the glory of God, through his *over-ruling Providence*. But does that *Provi-*

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dence, which eventually over-rules the sinful actions of men to terminate in his own glory, supersede *Moral Government*, or in any one instance defeat its design? Surely not.

3. DIVINE PROVIDENCE may sometimes be concerned in removing impediments out of the way, that the hardened sinner may be more at liberty, to execute the wickedness which is in his own heart. Thus while *Joseph* the *Patriarch* remained at home with his Father, his Brethren found no opportunity to do him harm: but when *Divine Providence* directed *Jacob* to send *Joseph* to carry provision to his brethren, who were in a solitary and unfrequented place, one material obstacle to their wicked designs was removed.—Reuben wished to restore him to his Father, and to this end prevailed with them to cast him into a pit, intending to have returned afterwards and to have taken him away; thus his life was secured.—But Providence sent Reuben to a place remote from the pit, that he should not prevent his Brethren from selling him to the *Ismaelites*; and by this means that obstacle was taken out of the way.—Wherein does it appear that God by this act of *Divine Providence* infringes on the liberty of *Moral Agents*, while they are violating his sacred Laws? Can God, in any proper sense, be considered as the *efficient cause* of their wickedness, while his *Providence* is removing impediments out of their way, and over-ruling their unrighteous intentions to promote his own glory? By no means.

4. DIVINE

4. DIVINE PROVIDENCE may be supposed to set boundaries to the sinful conduct of men, and thereby restrain them from perpetrating the wickedness that is in their hearts. This may be called *restraining Providence*, and is effected in various ways.—*By establishing penal Laws* in civilized Countries. These have been the means of preventing multitudes from running to those lengths of riot, into which their inclinations would otherwise have led them: those laws acting as a bridle of restraint upon mankind, in general, are calculated to hinder them from committing acts of violence.—*By using the authority of superiors*, to check the wickedness of the common people. What but this prevented the Jews, from imbruing their hands in the blood of the apostle Paul, when they set upon him in the temple, with a full intent to slay him.—*By implanting a sense of honor and reputation in the human breast*, men have been frequently prevented the commission of some sins, contrary to their own inclinations. Thus the opinion which the multitude sometimes entertained of Jesus Christ, prevented the Pharisees from laying hands on him, lest they should lose the esteem of the common people.—*By placing Conscience in the breast of every man*, as Gods vicegerent, Divine Providence has frequently prevented men from running into sin, when surrounded with temptation.—*By fixing in men a sense of worldly interest*, Divine Providence has stimulated some men to afford protection to the innocent. Thus the life of our Queen Elizabeth was preserved during the reign of

her Sister Mary, amidst the most imminent dangers, arising from her jealousy and bigotry, by the interposition of her Brother in law, King Philip, solely actuated by secular views.—*By depriving men of a favourable opportunity for perpetrating their wicked designs, Divine Providence has secured the lives of his faithful Servants. Possidonius in the life of Augustine, tells us, that the good Father going to teach the people of a certain Town, took a guide with him, to shew him the way: the Guide mistook the usual road, and ignorantly fell into a by-path, by which means he escaped death by the hands of the blood thirsty Donatists, who knowing his intention, way-laid him, with a design to assassinate him on the road; but their cruel purpose was frustrated, by depriving them of an opportunity to accomplish their barbarous scheme.—It is recorded of the Rev. Mr. JEWEL, that about the beginning of Queen Mary's Reign, the inquisition taking hold of him in Oxford, he fled for London by night, but providentially losing the road, he escaped the Inquisitors, who were in eager pursuit of him.—By suffering their enemies to come against them, Divine Providence sometimes calls off the attention of men, from the accomplishment of their malignant designs. Thus was Saul kept back from slaying David, by a report, that the Philistines had invaded his Kingdom.—By miraculous interpositions, Divine Providence has sometimes prevented men from executing their wicked intentions. When Baalam was journeying on his way, with a full intent to have cursed Israel, the Lord opened the mouth of the dumb Ass*
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to reprove the madness of the Prophet.—When *Jeroboam* stretched out his hand to seize the Prophet for prophesying against the altar at Bethel, *Divine Providence* withered and dried it up.—When King *Uzziah* invaded the Priests-Office, the Lord smote him with an incurable leprosy, and thereby prevented his wicked design.—But in all these ways, adopted by *Divine Providence*, for the purpose of checking the wickedness of men, is there any thing inconsistent, or incompatible with *Moral Government*, or opposed to *free Agency*? Is there any Agency or compulsive Influence made use of, either to seduce men from the path of duty, or to lay them under an absolute necessity to obey the will of God? Excepting those boundaries which have been set to their wicked actions, which they cannot pass; and without which, this world would be a theatre of slaughter and bloodshed.

5. *DIVINE PROVIDENCE* is concerned in fitting men for, and placing them in their different stations and employments, so far as those stations and employments are lawful and beneficial: and even in suffering men to fill up stations which are in themselves unlawful. The Divine Being bestows upon men all those mental and corporal powers, all those different dispositions and appetites, which are in themselves innocent, and by which they are qualified to fill up different departments allotted them in human life. It is *He* who has formed, the strong and hardy Labourer,—the ingenious Artist,—the accute Mathematician.

Mathematician,—the sage Philosopher,—the eloquent Orator,—the Sublime Poet,—the able Counsellor,—the consummate Statesman,—the wise Legislator,—with every other useful character in social life.—But is there any thing in the formation of our mental faculties, and the organs of sense, in our passions, and appetites, that has the least effect on *Moral Government*, so as to supersede or clash against it? are not men, when created, left to act for themselves, and to use or pervert those powers with which *Divine Providence* has endued them? excepting those restraints, and bounds, which *Providence* has sometimes been pleased to set to their sinful career: but is there any thing in all this, that destroys *Moral Agency*, or that makes the actions of men any other, than, properly, their own? Or does there appear to be any contrariety between *Providential* and *Moral Government*?

DIVINE PROVIDENCE, for reasons which we cannot fathom, sometimes suffers men to be engaged in unlawful employments: God made man upright; but he hath sought out many inventions. Yet this, in no wise, opposes his *Moral Government*, or infringes on *that liberty* which is essential to *Moral Agency*. Neither does it in the least, reflect on the infinite wisdom of God, seeing that he is able to over-rule all the conduct of his creatures to his own glory.

6. DIVINE PROVIDENCE sometimes suffers his creatures to do that, which may be the occasion of transgression, to others. Thus the serpent was suffered to tempt Eve, which was the occasion of her sin, and of the ruin of her posterity. The wicked are sometimes suffered to oppress the righteous, which is frequently the occasion of their acting an unbecoming part. Peter when urged by the enemies of Christ, and questioned concerning his being one of his followers, denied his Lord and Master with oaths and Imprecations. And a man under oppression may indulge an unfuitable Temper, and use unlawful methods to get out of his difficulties. But are the circumstances above-mentioned the *efficient causes* of men's transgressing the Divine Laws, or are they *the occasion* of it only? They cannot be the *efficient cause* of sinning: for instance, why might not Eve, when tempted, as well have called in her husband, to consult him whether it were proper or not, to eat of the forbidden fruit, as immediately to have yielded to the Tempter? And why may not a man under oppression, as well call to mind the Divine Omnipresence, which observes the most secret deviations of the heart from the rule of rectitude; and the Divine Omnipotence, which is able to punish the oppressor and relieve the oppressed; and likewise the Divine Truth and Faithfulness of God in his promise; and so carefully avoid whatever would incur his displeasure, as to give himself up to lawless passions, to speaking unadvisedly with

with his lips, and to murmuring against the most high? Therefore temptation and oppression, are not *the efficient causes*, but *the occasions*: and pride, ignorance, impatience and rebellion, are *the real causes* of a man's acting wrong, under present trying, or afflictive dispensations.

7. DIVINE PROVIDENCE may place, or bring men into such circumstances that they shall thence take occasion to sin against Him.—The providence of God led the people of Israel through the wilderness, by such ways, that they were sure to suffer the want of water; this proved an occasion of their murmuring against the Lord, and against his servant Moses, which was doubtless a great sin. The question then is! Was Gods conducting them thither *the cause* of their murmuring, or was it only *the occasion* of it? It was certainly not *the cause*; for why might not the people have prayed to the Lord, as well as have indulged themselves in murmuring against him? They must have known that he could have given them water or any thing else that was needful for them; and it was as easy for them to have become humble suppliants, as impatient accusers of the Almighty. Their difficulties, therefore, were not *the causes*, but *the occasions* of their murmuring: the *cause* originated in the wickedness and hardness of their hearts.

IN the fullness of time, God sent forth his only begotten Son into our world: the Jews were offended at Him, persecuted him, and at last embrued their hands in his innocent blood; whereby they filled up the measure of their horrid iniquities. But was this gracious act of God *the cause* of their wickedness, or did not that spring from an evil heart of unbelief and wilful obstinacy? The Divine Being caused his gospel to be promulgated among the Gentiles; but they, instead of hearkening, cruelly persecuted the messengers and ministers of Christ. Was God's giving them the gospel *the cause* of all their wickedness, or only the *innocent occasion* of it? Doubtless the *innocent occasion* only. The fault was not in the dispensation of providence, but in man's rebellious heart. Nor do these dispensations of *Providence*, either interfere with God's *Moral Government*, or the *liberty* of *Moral Agents*.

3. DIVINE PROVIDENCE is immediately concerned in regenerating the hearts of sinful men, and in restoring them to the Divine Image. This is properly the work of God, and in the sacred Scriptures is uniformly ascribed to the Holy Spirit. And whatever means or instruments he may chuse to work by, the subjects of this happy change are passive in the matter: they are wrought upon. They do not so much as desire to be converted, till the work is begun in them. Generally speaking they have an aversion to it in their own mind, and great oppositions are made against those means and Instruments, which are

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employed by the Holy Spirit. Some therefore may hence conclude, that the *Providence* of God is herein opposed to man's *free Agency*. Concerning which I would observe, that in this Divine work, the Almighty assumes a new character, viz. that of the God of Grace and Mercy; that it is in every point of view, a sovereign work, wherein man is not the *Agent*, but the subject: it is the effect of a Divine *Agency*; man's Will is not active in it: and when this Divine work is performed, and his heart is renewed by Grace, he is then as much a *free Agent* in doing good, as he was before in doing evil. *Moral Government* therefore is not in the least infringed upon, in the salvation of Man; but in every respect maintained. The Lord Jesus Christ has rendered a complete obedience to the requirements of the Law, on behalf of the heirs of Glory: and he has suffered a punishment adequate to all their sins. And, by the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit, they are made more capable of performing the Duties enjoined by the *Moral Governor*. By all these circumstances, *Moral Government* is not only vindicated by *Divine Providence*, but honored and magnified. As the heirs of glory were under the protection of Divine Providence, as creatures, prior to their conversion; so, now, being made the subjects of a gracious principle, they are under the protecting Hand of Providence, as new creatures in Christ; being kept by the mighty power of God through Faith unto Salvation. And, as in the first Adam, mankind were placed on the foundation of a covenant of works, and their

their safety wholly depended on obedience; so, in the second Adam, the heirs of glory rest on the foundation of a covenant of grace, and their standing depends upon the immutable promise of eternal life given them in Christ Jesus, and the continuation of the Divine favour, enabling them to work out their Salvation with fear and trembling. Nor can I perceive that *Moral Government* sustains any injury by these means, seeing that its honor has been already secured in the person of the sacred Redeemer, and the subjects of this grace shall be ultimately restored to a capacity for rendering perfect obedience to the moral law, and secured in that obedience by an act of sovereign Grace.

9. DIVINE PROVIDENCE, or the sovereign authority of the Deity, is sometimes exercised over the inclinations of men's Wills, and thereby they are swayed and turned, whithersoever he pleaseth; as it is written, "The Kings heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." (Prov. 21. 1.) "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord." (Prov. 16. 1.) The Divine Being *frustrateth the tokens of liars, and maketh diviners mad, he turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.* (Isa. 44. 25.) "He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprize." (Job. 5. 12.) "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He

“maketh the devices of the people of none effect.” (Psal. 33. 10.) From these declarations it evidently appears, that the Lord interposeth by his *Providence*, whenever it seemeth good in his sight, to frustrate the wicked designs of men, or to change the purposes of their hearts, for the protection of his own people. Therefore, while he, in some measure, suffers men to act from themselves, as free Agents, he still keeps an observant eye over them, and whenever it is necessary, he interposes His *Divine Agency* to prevent the mischief which is in their hearts: so, that *the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.* Psal. 76. 10. When wicked *Haman* had obtained leave of the King *Ahasuerus* to slay all the Jews throughout his dominions, *Divine Providence* interfered, and so effectually changed the heart of the *Monarch*, that *Haman* was hanged upon the very Gallows he had erected for *Mordecai*, and the Jews were delivered from the intended destruction. But in all this, there is not the least ground to conclude that *Divine Providence* ever exerts its influence over the minds of men, to cause them to do wickedly; no, not even in those instances in which he has appointed men to office, solely with a view to punish the wickedness of others, who have merited destruction at his hands: as, the anointing of *Jehu* to be king over Israel, that he might utterly destroy the house of *Ahab*: and the anointing of *Hazael* to be king of Syria, that he might scourge the Israelites for their Iniquities. For we cannot hesitate a moment to allow, that the Divine Being
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has a right to commission whom he will to be the Executioners of his vengeance, on them who have forfeited their lives to Divine Justice; and were they to perform His orders, as an act of obedience, and in a proper Spirit, I cannot perceive that they would be chargeable with any crime: or else, the Israelites must have been guilty of very great wickedness, when they took possession of the Land of Canaan. But their having a commission from the Deity, fully justified their conduct, while they destroyed the Inhabitants, who had, by sinning, forfeited their lives to God's avenging Law. But if the executioners of God's vengeance act in their own Spirit, and exercise wanton cruelties; this must be imputed to themselves, and neither to the *Divine Agency*, nor to the *Divine Commission*; nevertheless the delinquents have deserved severer punishments at the hand of God, than those which he suffers to be inflicted on them by these Instruments of his vengeance. So that God is righteous, though men be wicked, while they are fulfilling His purposes: for He does not influence their minds to sin: His influence being always directed to another object.

UPON a general and unprejudiced survey of the conduct of DIVINE PROVIDENCE, it in no respect appears to be the *efficient cause* of the commission of any one single sin; much less of being the *main spring* in the production and continuance of *Moral Evil*, as some have represented it; and yet it is, in some way or other, concerned

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in every transaction of human life. Neither does it ever deprive men of the liberty of acting for themselves, except when exerting its influence for the protection of the innocent, the support and defence of civil society, and the security of the Church of God. And then it only arrests and restrains the delinquent, to prevent further mischief, acting as an opposer of vice; but not as a destroyer of virtue. And surely the Divine Being has a right to protect and defend his own people, and to uphold those civil societies in existence, which infinite wisdom has seen meet to establish in the world, for the benefit of mankind; when to accomplish this, no other exertion of authority is necessary, than that of restraining wickedness, and influencing the minds of men to the performance of laudable actions. This *authority of control* over the creatures, is what every lover of mankind must rejoice to see in the hands of unerring Wisdom; and which the Divine Being can never relinquish, consistently with himself, as the infinitely wise *Governor* of the Universe, who doth whatsoever he pleaseth in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the earth.

P A R T, II.

On M O R A L E V I L.

S E C T. I.

On the Nature of Moral Evil.

VARIOUS have been the sentiments of men on this subject. Some have considered *Moral Evil*, as a deviation from right reason, and consequently from the will of the Divine Legislator, who gave us that as a rule.—Some have thought that *Moral Evil* denotes our idea of a quality apprehended in actions, which excites aversion towards the actor, even from persons who receive

no injury thereby.—The Apostle Paul says, “Sin is a transgression of the Law: for where no law is, there is no transgression.”—It is an act of rebellion against the Deity; in which, the *Moral Agent* tramples on the authority of the MORAL GOVERNOR.—Some have affirmed it to be *merely a relative evil*, and not any thing *really evil* in itself.—And others look upon it as a *real evil*; as much so as *natural evil*.

MORAL EVIL may be considered in a two-fold point of view. As it exists in the *Moral Agent*; and as it discovers itself in *external actions*.

I. LET us consider it as it exists in *the mind*, or inheres in the *Moral Agent*. Here we behold it in all that infidelity, enmity against God, alienation of the heart from him, rebellion against his government, disinclination to obey his will: in all that pride, covetousness, undue attachment to the creatures, malice, envy, hatred, malevolence, hypocrisy, concupiscence, &c. &c. which are found in the human heart.

THAT these dispositions exist in depraved *Moral Agents* is a self evident proposition. And should I attempt to prove it, I fear my ingenious reader would charge me with trifling. In *these innate dispositions* of the human heart, *Moral Evil* consists. This is human depravity. And from hence proceed, all the sinful actions in the

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Moral World. This is the baleful root which springs up with our existence, grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength. It brings forth that corrupt and malignant fruit, which imbitters human life; it renders the path through this world rugged and dangerous; and in fine, it mars our every comfort, and poisons our every social enjoyment.

2. LET us consider *Moral Evil*, as it discovers itself, in *external actions and events*. And here we behold it in fields of blood and slaughter, destroying and desolating the habitations of men, involving nations and empires in awful ruin; in acts of cruel oppression, rapine and violence; in the worshipping of idols, in an improper confidence placed in the creatures, a neglect of the Deity, a contempt of his sabbaths and sanctuary, a prophanation of his holy and reverend name, and in an open defiance of his authority and law; in dishonour done to parents, adultery, false witness, extortion, drunkenness, and murder; and in all the abominations committed by mankind, to the violation of the laws, both human and divine.

Is *Moral Evil* then, *real evil*, or only *relative*?—From the description above, does it not appear to be a *real evil*? Does it not deprive us of *real good*? of communion with the Deity, a sense of divine favour, peace of conscience, self-approbation, integrity, and true fortitude? Is it not introductive of *real evil*, guilt, servile tormenting fear, misery and infamy; and if no remedy

be applied, will it not conduct to everlasting punishment? And is not that a *real evil*, which deprives of *real good*, and introduces *positive evil*? For in proportion to the measure of *Moral Evil*, such is the *misery* of the *Moral Agent*. As it is written, *The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest—There is no peace saith my God to the wicked.*—Isa. 57. 26. 21.

As it appears to be *real evil*, *subjectly* considered; is it not so when viewed *objectively*? Does it not dishonour the Deity, trample on his authority, and disgrace his law? And if any should object, that the Divine Being cannot sustain a real injury from any thing that is done by his creatures, that his essential happiness is not diminished; nor the splendor of his essential glory sullied: this must be owing to the perfection of his nature; and yet, it must be acknowledged, that he is deprived of those ascriptions of praise, which are his just due, and that his glory is eclipsed to the intelligent world. And is this no real injury? Is there no *real evil* in robbing God of that which is due to him, and in obscuring the splendor of his glory from his creatures, that they should not see and adore him for his peerless perfections? If the Deity cannot be injured, yet, doubtless his creatures suffer by this means, a loss which none but God can repair.—Listen to the groans and cries of the oppressed, the sighings of the prisoners, and the distresses of those who severely feel the injuries done them by wicked and ungodly men.—

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And though the Divine Being can, and does, over-rule these sufferings for the good of those who are exercised thereby; yet this cannot change the nature of *Moral Evil*, nor make it to be what it is not, or would not have been, if no such over-ruling Agency had been exerted, i. e. *evil in itself*, and awfully destructive in its effects.

DR. PRIESTLY, in his Treatise on Philosophical Necessity, affirms, that *Moral Evil* is not *positive evil*; and seems unwilling to allow of the existence of *positive evil* in the universe. He says, “in the eye of a Necessarian “the idea of *real absolute evil* wholly disappears:”—Page 122. If nothing be *positive evil* but that which the Divine Being cannot over-rule, or make subservient to the purposes of good, probably the Dr. may be right: for he can undoubtedly over-rule all things to that end. However, I sincerely wish, he could take the sentiments of those spirits, who are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; as he will neither believe *Moses* nor the *prophets*, the *Lord Jesus Christ* nor his *apostles*.—Our blessed Redeemer introduces the rich man, as saying, to Abraham, “Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in “water, to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this “flame.” The Dr. might however, be disposed, gravely to reply, this is the *Effect* of *Moral Evil*; it is *Punishment*; it is *Discipline*, intended to reform and amend the wicked, and therefore it is not eventually *real evil*, but good! But is it reasonable to suppose that the Deity

would thus chastize and punish for *Moral Evil*, if it were not a *real evil*?

A Writer, under the name of *Search*, affirms, that, “*Moral Evil* were no *evil*, if there were no *Natural Evil*. “Because, how could I do wrong, if no hurt or damage “could ensue therefrom to any body? And it is no “greater than the mischief whereof it may be productive.” From this observation we are led to enquire, what is *Natural Evil*? How is it distinguished? Does this Author confine his idea of *Natural Evil* to the afflictions of the Body, or to the sufferings of the Mind, or to both these? Does he mean the punishments inflicted on the sinner? or does he take into the account all those sufferings endured in consequence of sin; as guilt, shame, fear, remorse and terror, &c? Or only the injuries, which the innocent suffer, from the evil conduct of the wicked? If he intend the damage sustained by others only, then those sins which are committed against the first table of the law, have no *evil* in them: for God cannot be injured by any thing that we can do.—“If thou art wicked what dost thou unto him?” Our first parents therefore did no *evil* in eating of the forbidden fruit.—But will the Deity punish that conduct which has no *evil* in it? The punishment of their disobedience proves it to have been *evil* in a proper sense. It must have been so in the account of God, who punished it as a violation of his express command. This shews that there is an *evil* in disobeying the express will of
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the Deity.—It is contrary to the fitness of things.—But if this Author includes all the sufferings which are the consequence of sin, under the term *Natural Evil*; then it amounts to no more than this, that *Moral Evil* were no evil, were it not for all the *natural, necessary, and truly awful* effects that follow the commission of it; which is nothing more then saying, *Moral Evil*, were no evil, if no unhappy consequences followed; that is, it were no evil, if it were no evil.

I most sincerely subscribe to the latter part of the sentence, “That *Moral Evil* is no greater than the mischief whereof it may be productive.” But this mischief extends to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever. For all the sufferings of mankind, both in this life, and that which is to come, are the necessary consequences of *Moral Evil*. They are effects springing from their proper cause. I know not that there is a single *Natural Evil* in the world, but such as necessarily flows from *Moral Evil* in one way or another. When God had created the universe, he saw that all was very good. Must not that therefore be a *real absolute evil*, which has been the cause of introducing all the misery that is in this world, and of all the torments of the next?

SOME

SOME Authors have suggested, that *Moral Evil* has been the medium of introducing more happiness into the moral world than misery, and that upon the whole though some individuals may suffer in consequence of *Moral Evil*, yet the whole rational world have been greatly benefited thereby: that the gain abundantly overbalances the loss sustained. But who, that reflects for a moment on this objection, does not see its fallacy, and that it is no more than begging the question: it is a matter that lies beyond the reach of human penetration; for except we had some revelation from God, or were permitted to enter into the invisible world, how can we say whether *Moral Evil* is productive of any good at all, or that the felicity of an individual has been increased by its introduction? Is not the enjoyment of God the alone source of all true happiness to the intellectual world? And could not rational Beings have enjoyed the Deity in equally as full and ample a manner without the introduction of *Moral Evil*? What, shall it be said, that sin has augmented our felicity! Then might the reprobate say, "Let us do *evil* that *good* may come."

MORAL EVIL is evidently contrary to the fitness of things; it is a disease in the moral world; which disorders and deranges the beautiful order of nature, and defaces the image of the Deity in his works. And shall it be said, there is no *positive evil* in all this; merely for the purpose of inverting the moral world; and of introducing a system entirely repugnant to divine revelation!

MORAL

MORAL EVIL is diametrically opposite to the Divine Nature which is holiness itself.—His nature is *good, positively and purely good*: that which is the direct opposite, must consequently be *positive evil*.—SIN is disapproved of by that *moral sense*, which the Deity has implanted in his intelligent creatures, with a view to enable them to distinguish between *good and evil*. In the greater degree that any one possesses this discriminating faculty, the more will He disapprove of *Moral Evil*; which is another evidence of its being *positive evil*.—But I forbear to intrude any longer on the patience of my reader, in proving a matter so self evident. The arguments above are abundantly satisfactory to myself, and I hope they will appear to be so to every unprejudiced reader.

S E C T. II.

S E C T. II.

*An attempt to prove that GOD is not the
Author of MORAL EVIL.*

WERE it not that some Authors of great eminence, in the republic of Letters, have deliberately avowed this sentiment, I should have deemed the present attempt totally unnecessary. And what may appear still more strange, at the same time that they charge the Deity with being the first cause of *Moral Evil*, they exculpate him from every kind of *blame*, or charge of *moral impurity*; and suppose that he could give existence to *SIN*, and yet remain as pure and holy as before: that he could involve his rational creatures in *sin* and *misery*, and yet continue the same tender, and affectionate Father, and entertain for them the same gracious designs. Because say they, *He did it from a good disposition, and with a good design.* Dr. PRIESTLY says, "Our supposing that God is the
Author

“ Author of Sin, by no means implies that he is a *sinful*
 “ *Being*; for it is the *disposition of mind* that constitutes
 “ the sinfulness of an action. If therefore his disposition
 “ and design be good, what he does is morally good.”—
 (Phil. Necess. p. 129.)—Artful sophism! Is it possible,
 in the nature of things, that *Moral Evil* should be produced
 with a *good disposition*, or *design*? No man can prove
 that the *moral world* shall suffer nothing from the introduction
 of SIN: much less, that any *real advantage* shall accrue
 from thence to *Moral Agents*. And to affirm any thing
 of the kind, is an unwarrantable presumption. If there
 be only one that eventually suffers by the introduction of
Moral Evil, and if the Deity foresaw this when he produced
 it, could he have a *good design* towards that individual?
 But how many individuals will suffer by it, is not within
 our limits to determine. All the angels that fell, and
 all ungodly men dying in a state of impenitence and
 rebellion against God, will suffer by that event to all
 eternity. And whatever Dr. PRIESTLY, or any other writer
 may suggest to the contrary, the sacred volume of eternal
 truth, gives not the least intimation of any provision
 made for the recovery of such out of the lake that
 burneth with fire and brimstone, *where their worm dieth*
not, and their fire is not quenched: but the smoke of their
torment will ascend up for ever and ever. I do not found
 the notion, of the *Eternity* of future punishment, on the
 demerit of one sin, or on any number of sins committed
 in this life; but upon the eternal duration of the guilty
 L. sufferer,

sufferer, and his everlastingly continuing to sin against his Maker. The number of those who will *suffer* by the *introduction* of *Moral Evil* will not be small: “For wide
 “is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruc-
 “tion, and many there be which go in thereat.” John the Divine says, speaking of the resurrection of the dead.
 “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the
 “thousand years were finished.—And when the thousand
 “years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
 “and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in
 “the four quarters of the earth, *Gog* and *Magog*, to
 “gather them together to battle, the number of whom is
 “as the sand of the sea.”—(Rev. 20. 5. 9.) God must have foreseen, that the introduction of *Moral Evil* would issue in the final ruin of all those, who fall under this description. Therefore in the production of *Moral Evil*, his *design* towards these could not have been *good*, whatever it might have been towards others. That action which is not done with a *good design*, towards those who may be effected thereby, cannot be a *good action*. God could not have a *good design* in the introduction of *Moral Evil*, with respect to an innumerable multitude of intelligent Beings; when he foresaw, that they would be everlastingly miserable, in consequence of *its introduction*. Therefore, according to Dr. PRIESTLY’S own mode of argument, the *introduction* of *Moral Evil* could not be a *morally good action*. Hence I conclude, on the Doctor’s own principle, that God could not be the *author* of *Moral Evil*, for that would prove him *to be*, what he is not,—a *sinful Being*.

1. GOD is all *goodness*, and there cannot be any thing in him of a contrary nature; no ill *disposition* or *design* towards his creatures; for that would be *evil*. They who think otherwise must be ignorant of his nature and perfections. Sin is a *real evil*, and could not originate from a *good disposition* or *design* towards multitudes of his creatures, who previously to sin's introduction, could not have offended him, in any respect. And to have studiously contrived their ruin, must have been so opposite to his *nature*, that our feelings revolt at the idea. What, shall a Being all *goodness*, overthrow and involve in everlasting destruction, a countless number of his creatures, who had never wilfully offended; for so it must have been, had sin originated in the Deity! God forbid, that we should entertain an idea so horrid, so absurd, and so unjust, concerning the most pure and perfect of all Beings! This would totally contradict the word of Divine revelation, which expressly declares, *that God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.* (Psalm. 145. 9.) "Out of the mouth of the most high proceedeth not evil and good."—"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" (Jer. 3. 38. 39.) How opposite to the Doctrine of Necessarianism! As they are his *own* sins, he cannot with justice complain; but if they were the unavoidable consequence of necessity, he might justly complain that he was treated with undeserved cruelty. But shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

2. THE immaculate holiness of the Moral Governor, furnisheth a clear and conclusive evidence, that he could not be the *primary cause* of *sin*. For if his nature be *pure* and *holy*, it is impossible that *moral impurity* should be derived from him; as *impurity* cannot originate in *purity*. That can never be derived from his *nature*, which is not in it. Suppose it should be rejoined. Though *sin* cannot be derived from him, that is, from his *nature*; yet, he might give it existence as a creator; as he has given to that of matter of various forms; though matter bears no relation to his *nature*, as far as we know, or can conceive of it. In answer to this objection, it may be replied; If he gave existence to *sin*, he either did it willingly, or unwillingly. He could not do it willingly in the nature of things; because he abhors it; and we cannot suppose that an *omnipotent Being* would produce that which is perfectly odious to himself: for if he hate the object, why give it existence; seeing that he acts without control. He could not be the cause of it against his will; as he had no superior to compel him. Should it be further asserted, Though he detests *sin*, yet he might give it existence, for the sake of disclosing those objects, which he has brought to light through its introduction; and which otherwise could not have been discovered. It may be answered, that though this may be a good reason for the *Sufferance* of *Moral Evil*; yet as the Divine Being loves *holiness*, and abhors *sin*, no consideration could induce him to be its *active cause*; especially as he could not be so without

without contaminating his own nature. A pure mind, must first be tainted, before it can become the *primary cause* of *sin*. Some have considered Sin in a negative sense, and term it a privation, with a view to prove that the *cause* of *sin* is in God; and others, with a view to prove that it might originate in the creature. Were we to admit that Sin is a *privation, only*, (out of complaisance to Gentlemen of this sentiment,) it would still appear plainly evident from the *holiness* and *purity* of his nature, that God could not be the Author of *Moral Evil*. For that *act* which divested the Moral Agent of his *purity*, and reduced the first transgressor to a *state* of *sin*, must either be a *morally good* or *bad action*. We have already proved that it could not be a good action, consequently the Deity could not be concerned in it.

SIN must first lose its natural turpitude, and become innoxious, before a Being of *spotless holiness* can give it existence. And such must be their ideas of *Moral Evil*, who think and write consistently in favour of God's being the Author of it. With them, *sin* is not a *real positive evil*. And when viewed in this light, it is no wonder they should so easily embrace that side of the question: but that others should entertain such a notion, who consider *sin* as a *real evil*, is not so easily accounted for. But having made it appear, that *sin* is a *real evil*; and that God is immaculately holy; how is it possible to consider him as the *efficient cause* of it?

3. THE *justice and righteousness* of the *Moral Governor*, supplies us with a striking argument, to prove that he cannot be the *Author of Moral Evil*. We have already shewn that God is just and righteous. As such he cannot do any thing to the injury of his creatures, yet to have seduced them from their duty, and to have involved them in sin and guilt, must have injured them essentially: but as God cannot do any thing to the damage of his creatures, it is impossible that he should have been *the first moving cause* of their transgression.

IF the conduct of the *Moral Governor*, correspond with our ideas of *justice and righteousness*, it is impossible in the nature of things, that he should be the Author of sin, and of influencing *Moral Agents* to violate his holy and righteous law; except we could make it to appear, that they shall eventually sustain no injury thereby, or else receive an adequate recompence; but it is impossible to do this, consistently with the inspired word of God: and even, Dr. PRIESTLY himself, in his scheme of Philosophical Necessity, does not attempt to reconcile his sentiment to divine revelation: could he have done this, the Doctors scheme would probably have been the most plausible that was ever offered to the public. But as that is impracticable, it has no basis to rest upon, but his own inventive imagination. For, however he may dispute the sense of the words *AIDIOS*, and *AIONOS*, rendered *for ever*, and *everlasting*, by our Translators; yet, while it is recorded of the wicked, *that their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*,

quenched, we must call in question the Doctor's notion of souls being liberated, from the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, where, according to the sacred scriptures, the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever. But how is it possible to make the ideas, of God's having become the *efficient cause* of the fall of man, and consequently of the sins of all the human race; and of his having doomed them to *eternal misery*, in consequence of their sin, comport with our conceptions of *justice* and *righteousness*? God is *just* and *right*. To be the Author of men's sinning against him, and then to punish their sin with eternal fire, is not in the least reconcilable with our ideas of *justice* and *righteousness*; and therefore, I conclude, that he could not, in the most remote sense of the word, be the *active cause* of their sin.

IN order to bring the whole of the foregoing arguments into one general view, it might here be observed, that according to the nature and fitness of things, *Moral Evil* could not *originate* in the Deity; because, it could neither be derived from him as its proper source; being opposite to his nature: nor could it be produced by him; for it does not consist with the nature of things, to suppose, that he should be capable of giving existence to that which is *positive evil*, by reason of his *goodness*; *sin* is *positive evil*, and therefore could not owe its existence to him: and were we only to consider it as a privation; it does not comport with the nature and fitness of things, to suppose, that the Deity should rob his creatures, of that, which he himself
had

had bestowed upon them, as necessary to render them capable of obeying his will. Would he first make, and then *unmake* his rational creatures? Strange idea! Neither could *sin* be owing to his *influence*; for he cannot influence any of his creatures to that which is *evil*: He has not so much as laid a temptation before them, to draw them aside from their duty; but has guarded them by threatenings and promises, to keep them in the path of holiness and obedience. “God tempteth no man to *evil*.” (Jam. i. 13.) Sin bears no relation to God, either as an *Author*, a *Prompter*, or *moving cause* of any kind: and therefore, in the nature of things, its existence could not be derived from him.—Is it reasonable to suppose, that a Being all love, should produce Enmity! That a Being all holiness and purity, should produce unholiness and impurity!—produce that which he hates!—become the Author of that which he abhors!—and do that which is evil in itself, to bring about that which is good: as if he could not have brought about good, without the introduction of evil!

If the Deity were the *first cause* of moral depravity, it could not, in the nature of things, be *evil*; it could not be *sin*; for such is his nature and perfections, that he could not give existence to that which may be deemed *evil*, or *sinful*: *sin* must then have lost its essential quality, before we can conclude, that God was the *first cause* of it; and in this case, it would not have been opposite to his will,
offensive

offensive to him in it's nature, or an act of disobedience to himself; for by what mode of reasoning can that be proved to be an act of disobedience to God, offensive to him in it's nature, or opposite to his will, which is the effect of his own *Agency*? Also, that *action*, which is an effect of the *Divine Agency*, can with no propriety be deemed a *moral action*; for it is not properly the action of the *Moral Agent*, but the action of the *Moral Governor*: and therefore cannot be of the *moral kind*, i. e. as done by the creature. Thus it appears, from the very nature of things, to be absolutely impossible for the Supreme Being to have been the *first cause* of sin.

IT may be objected, if God be not the *first cause* of *Moral Evil*, then we must necessarily allow of *two first causes*; one the *first cause* of all *moral good*, and another the *first cause* of all *Moral Evil*. This at first sight may, to some, have a very disagreeable appearance indeed; but on a little nearer inspection it's terrific image disappears, and this monster of an objection becomes perfectly inoffensive. It amounts to no more than this, that, if God did not give existence to *Moral Evil*, then a creature must have been the *first cause* of its introduction into the moral world. And what then? What absurdity will follow from thence if it be admitted? Is there any thing so very inexplicable and mysterious in this, that we should stumble at the idea? If a creature could not have been the *first cause* of *Moral Evil*,

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then a creature could not have committed sin of himself; but must necessarily have been aided and assisted by the Creator! But will any man in the right use of his intellectual faculties affirm, that it was impossible a *Moral Agent*, left to the freedom of his own will, should have been capable of violating the law prescribed as a test of his obedience, without the aid of his Creator; who by that means, also, must have become the *first moving cause* of his creatures sinning against himself! Admit of such a sentiment, and then, what kind of figure will the *Moral Governor* make in the eye of sound reason and understanding?—A *Moral Governor* enacting righteous laws; then influencing His *subjects* to transgress them; and afterwards punishing the breach of those laws with everlasting torment! Reader, can these things accord with your common sense? Whither will polemical disputation carry us; and into what absurdities will it not betray us?

That God could not have been the *first cause* of *Moral Evil*, is manifest, from it's nature, it is *positive evil*; from the moral perfections of the Deity, His *Goodness*, *koliness*, and *justice*; and from the nature of things, which renders it impossible for the Deity to have been the *first cause* of *sin*. And if the MORAL GOVERNOR were not the *first cause*, it must have originated in the *Moral Agent*: which, I hope, will more fully appear under its proper head.

S E C T. III.*On the Introduction of Moral Evil.*

THAT *Moral Evil* does exist, is too apparent to require any argument.—That there was a time when it first began to exist, was never disputed that I know of.—But to account for its introduction, has greatly perplexed the Moralist in all Ages. And it may always remain an impenetrable mystery, not to be unravelled by finite beings, in this imperfect state. How it was possible for the Angels, whose nature was pure, and whose minds were disposed to obey the will of their Creator, to deviate from the path of rectitude, and to embrace that which was so repugnant to their

Duty? must be a question very difficult to solve.—It may also appear as hard a task to account for the defection of Man, seeing that he had a disposition perfectly conformed to that Law, prescribed for the rule of his conduct. We do not know that he had ~~any~~ pride, or ambition in his nature, for temptation to operate upon; or any desire, but such as corresponded with the will of God.—There seems to have been nothing in his nature but rectitude: and yet we cannot suppose that the tempter had power to change his disposition, or to impart a different nature, than that, which he received from the hands of his Creator.

SOME have endeavoured to solve this difficulty in one way, and some in another.—Some have imagined that God decreed those Events, and appointed suitable objects of temptation to allure the *Angels* from their allegiance, which could not fail of success; and then the *Deceiver* was appointed to act the part of a tempter to seduce our *first Parents*. All which might do very well, if we could exculpate the Deity, on this hypothesis, from being the *primary cause* of *Moral Evil*.

OTHERS have supposed, that every action of the creatures, is the effect of an *influx* from the Deity: and that the *morality* of every action, is owing to a *moral influx*. That God might *influence* to action, but *withhold* the *moral influx*; and as the creature was *incapable* of acting
morally

morally of himself, without the *moral influx*; therefore, when the *common influx* impelled him to action, he performed his action *wrong*, for want of the continuance of the *moral influx*. This was the sentiment of the learned Dr. WHITSEUS. But if the *morality* of the creatures action depended on the *moral influx*, and if *that influx* was withheld, with a *design* to involve him in *criminality*, does it not remove *blame* from the creature? And except it can be made fairly to appear, that this mode of reasoning does not criminate the Deity, it cannot be admissible. Besides this scheme subverts itself; for, if God *influenced* Adam to eat of the *forbidden fruit*, he influenced him to a *wrong action*, an action that could not be performed *right*, by any means. So that there was not only a want of the *moral influx*, but an *influx* that *directly* and *particularly* operated against it: which goes very far towards making God the *Author of Moral Evil*.

OTHERS have conceived, that the introduction of *Moral Evil*, was a certain and necessary consequence of God's withdrawing himself from his creatures; just as the introduction of darkness, is a natural effect of the Sun's withdrawing itself from our hemisphere. This was the idea of Mr. EDWARDS, when he wrote his Treatise on the Will. But this hypothesis involves in it a contradiction: for it supposeth sin to exist before it did. Darkness was *prior* to light; it was the original state of the vast expanse before creation: the first state of Chaos before light was formed:

formed: and therefore if light be withdrawn, it becomes dark by a necessary consequence: for darkness is generally considered as a negative idea. But sin did not exist *prior* to holiness: this was not the natural state of things in the *Moral World*. Holiness *preceded* sin: and sin therefore must be something more than a *privation*. The *want* of holiness does not *necessarily imply the existence of Moral Evil*, for there are creatures which are *destitute* of *Moral purity*, and yet have *no positive Moral Evil* in them; as brute animals, and probably man in a state of Idiotism. Yet, it may be said, that if a *Moral Agent* be *destitute* of supreme love to God, he must be the subject of *Moral Evil*; for he is a transgressor of the law, who does not love God with a superlative affection. In answer to this objection it may be observed, that the *absence of love* does not necessarily suppose *the existence of enmity*: for it is only a *privation* of good, and not an *infusion* of *positive evil*: and there may be such a state as that of indifference.— But were we to admit, that *the withdrawment* of holiness, is necessarily followed by *the introduction* of sin: yet what advantage would this be of to our opponents? Except they could also prove, that *God's withdrawment* of his presence, or influence, from a pure creature, necessarily makes that creature either impure, or takes away its holiness; which I think impossible to be done: for how should this circumstance produce any change in its nature? This would undoubtedly lessen its enjoyments; but I cannot conceive that it would change its nature; and therefore
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am justified in concluding, that the introduction of sin is not a necessary consequence of *God's withdrawment* of himself. The creature being made holy and pure, *God's withdrawment* of his presence, did not, could not render it unholy or impure: except we could suppose that in withdrawing himself he *divested it* of all moral purity and perfection, which I conceive no one will affirm. But if they should, yet even in that case, I cannot conceive how this should operate as the cause of introducing *Moral Evil*: for what reason can be rendered why the creature might not have remained in *that negative state*, till God had vouchsafed *to revisit* it again; and if it had, how could it have been guilty of positive Moral Evil: or wherein could it have been *deemed culpable*? But granting that the *Divine withdrawment*, actually *deprived* the *Moral Agent* of all moral goodness, and *necessarily infused* Moral Evil, then Moral Evil was introduced by an *unavoidable natural necessity*. The Moral Agent under such circumstances could not *avoid choosing* Moral Evil; and if he could not *avoid choosing it* (that inability arising from the Divine withdrawment) then the necessity of Moral Evil was a *natural* and not a *moral necessity*, in the first instance: and except any one can prove, that *he willed* this withdrawment, or *did something that deserved it*, the introduction of sin was owing not to a *moral*, but a *natural necessity*: which throws the *whole blame* of sin's introduction upon the Divine Being.

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IF it be said, that the creature did something to deserve this; that action doubtless must have been a sinful one: and therefore their whole argument involves in it, *a palpable contradiction*: for sin would have been *the cause* and not the *effect* of that *withdrawment*: and therefore sin, according to this hypothesis, existed before it actually did exist, and was *self produced*. How erroneous a mode of reasoning *this*, and how shocking to common sense!

ALL these schemes have a tendency to make God *the first cause of Moral Evil*, and therefore are to be suspected; for we have already proved that God could not be the Author of sin, by arguments, drawn from the nature and fitness of things. We must therefore look for the introduction of *Moral Evil* in the *subjects of Moral Government*, or more properly in *that Agent* who first transgressed the Divine Law, where alone it is to be found, consistently with our ideas of *Moral Agency*, and the *proper imputation of guilt* to the aggressor. And why should it be thought a thing incredible that a peccable creature should be capable of sinning? Some indeed have wondered at the sin of angels, and have said, "How could a pure creature become impure? How could an holy Being, to whom obedience was natural, disobey, and so err from itself, and act against nature?" And they have endeavoured to find out *a cause* for this mysterious Event: and as they could not divine, how it was possible, that an holy creature should become unholy

unholy and impure of itself, or capable of sinning till its nature was depraved: and as there was no transgressor to corrupt *the first* sinner by temptation, they very gravely conclude, that God must have been *the primary cause* of his creature's sinning against himself; and hereby make him *the origin* of Moral Evil!! But, surely, it would have become them much better to have sought out some other *cause*: for, the same reason, which in their opinion, militates against the idea of a creature's sinning of itself, operates much more strongly, against the supposition of Gods being the author of sin; and if their argument amount to anything, it proves, that *Moral Evil*, must either have been from eternity, or else, that it could not have existed at all. If God be the author of it, it must have eternally existed in him. It could not originate in him as its author, because, it is diametrically opposite to his nature and perfections. And, as there was no other being from eternity, but God himself, if *Moral Evil* did not exist in him, it did not exist at all.

BUT, as angels and men were made peccable, as such, they were capable of sinning of themselves; and there is no necessity for seeking any other *cause*, than that which existed in their peccability. To say, they could not sin without foreign aid, is to deny their peccability; if they were not peccable, they could not have sinned of themselves, and therefore, in sinning, were

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not Agents, but instruments: and if only instruments, then not responsible for their conduct.

IT may be further alledged, "But why did God "make them peccable; does not this seem as if he "intended them to sin"? It is matter of doubt whether God could have formed a *moral probationary creature that was impeccable*: for that would in some sort have been deifying the creature, by rendering him independant and immutable. But, do such perfections correspond with our ideas of a finite Being? and if not, the difficulty instantly vanishes. For it is not a miracle, that a creature capable of sinning, should commit sin of it-self, without the intervention of any external cause whatsoever. It appears a self evident proposition, that, if God created a *probationary Moral Agent*, that *Agent* must have had a capacity, both of obeying, and of disobeying: for, if only capable of obeying, it could not be a *probationer*, and then, a test of obedience would have been altogether unnecessary, as it could not have disobeyed without receiving new powers: and therefore, it could not be considered, as in a *state of probation*; though that was the very state, in which, every rational creature was placed, prior to the fall. And hence it appears, that the Deity was faultless, when he made his intelligent creatures *peccable*; for he could not have done otherwise, while he formed them *mutable* and *probationary*

probationary: and being thus created, they must have been liable, at least, to have deviated from the rule of rectitude. But they could not have been made otherwise than *mutable* and *probationary*; because it does not consist with the nature and fitness of things, that a creature, should either possess one of the distinguishing perfections of Deity (i.e. immutability); or that it should be without a test, to prove its obedience to the will of its Creator. *

SHOULD any be disposed to ask, Why did God *suffer* sin to enter into the moral world, seeing that he could have hindered it? And, whether his *suffering* it, does not seem to indicate, that he *willed* its existence? and if he *willed* its existence, may we not infer, that his *will* had some *influence*, or *tendency* to produce it? We cannot doubt of Gods ability to have

* ————— he had of me
 All he could have; I made him just and right,
 Sufficient to have stood, tho' free to fall.
 Such I created all th' ethereal Powers
 And Sp'rits, both them who stood and them who fail'd;
 Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
 Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
 Of true allegiance, constant faith or love,
 Where only what they needs must do appear'd,
 Not what they would? what praise could they receive?
 What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
 When will and reason (reason also's choice)
 Useless and vain, of freedom both dispoiled,
 Made passive both, had serv'd necessity,
 Not me;

Milton Par. Lost B III. line 97.

prevented the introduction of sin, in one point of view: as, he could have destroyed his creatures, prior to their sinning; or he could have influenced their minds, so as to have hindered their commission of it; and thereby, utterly have put it out of their power. He, doubtless, could have confirmed them in a state of innocence, and then it would have been as impossible for them to have sinned, as it is impossible for the angels to sin, who have been confirmed in Christ. But then, it is proper to consider, whether he could have done this consistently with his character, as a *Moral Governor*; with the *state* of his creatures, as probationers; and the *objects* he had in view by making them such, viz. the trial of their obedience; and the display of the perfections of his nature, his holiness and justice, in rewarding, or punishing them, according to their obedience, or disobedience to that law, which he had inscribed upon their hearts. If it was right, and fit, for the Divine Being to support his character as the MORAL GOVERNOR: to place his creatures in a state of *probation*, that he might be obeyed *freely* and *voluntarily*;—and to display his moral rectitude, in rewarding the observers, and in punishing the violaters of his will: then it would have been wrong for him to have interfered, by the exertion of his agency and influence, to prevent the introduction of Moral Evil.—He cannot do wrong, and the fact proves that it was right for him to do as he did;—i. e. exert his

his *Legislative Authority*, and leave his creatures to act for themselves, and to abide the consequence. Had he acted otherwise, he must have superseded his own character, as a MORAL GOVERNOR; *suspended his power and authority* over his creatures, as a *Lawgiver*; *changed their state*, as *probationers*; and *prevented the trial* of their *integrity and allegiance* to himself? Upon a close or attentive view of these things, it will not appear to have been so easy a matter, for the Divine Being to have prevented the introduction of Moral Evil, as some have imagined. He could not have done this, without manifestly deranging the wisest plan that was ever laid, a plan every way calculated to display the perfections of the Deity, in the most striking manner. Nay, may we not conclude, that it was impossible in the nature of things, that the Divine Being should have prevented the introduction of Moral Evil, when he had predetermined to leave this matter to the free choice of his rational creatures, to stand or fall of themselves, having full power to do either: as we may reasonably infer from the angels who fell not, for they were undoubtedly placed in a *probationary state*, as well as those who fell; but they kept their integrity, and were afterwards confirmed in Christ, in consequence of their obedience. Had the rest imitated their example, we may reasonably conclude, they would have shared the same privilege. For, we cannot suppose, that the Divine Being, had less regard for one part of his workmanship, than he had for another. He naturally loved *the whole*, with an equal affection, to every part.

T H E R E

THERE is an additional objection, which may be advanced concerning the introduction of Moral Evil, into our world, which does not operate against the introduction of it into the angelic world. The angels sinned as individuals, every one for himself: but Adam's sin, involved in it, all the human race. How does it correspond with the goodness and mercy of God, to have permitted Adam to have had an offspring? And his descendants to have been sharers in his guilt and misery? That God suffered him to have an offspring; and that this offspring became involved in his transgression cannot be denied. It is also, as indisputably true, that God is good and merciful. And though, we should not be able to fathom the depths of his mysterious providence, yet the state of the question still remains the same: for facts cannot be controverted. —God is good—and yet man was suffered to propagate a sinful race—nor is it an object that now concerns us, how sin and guilt were transmitted from Adam to his offspring; whether as their federal, or as their natural head; or in both these ways: for this makes but little difference in the matter before us. When the Divine Being created man, he virtually created the whole human race in one: for all mankind existed in the first Adam; as the tree with all its branches, foliage, blossoms, and fruits, are enveloped in the kernel before it is sown. Had the Divine Being immediately destroyed mankind, he must have annihilated his own workmanship, the far greater part of which he had designed for the enjoyment of himself, in
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his heavenly kingdom. But, how would it have become him to have done this, when he was able to restore that which was lost by sin, to the glory of his moral perfections? May we not conclude, that whatever he has done, was, what his divine wisdom saw the most perfectly just and right? Were would have been the propriety of destroying the work of his own hands: of frustrating his own counsels, and of making his own gracious purposes of none effect?—Would it have become, the all wise ruler of the universe, that the conduct of a creature should have changed his counsels, and deranged his plan of operations? surely not. There can be, therefore, no room for impeaching the goodness and mercy of God, when both sides of the question are properly stated. Besides, this very *Event*, awful as it was, clearly unfolds some of the divine perfections, which otherwise must have been obscured; such as his patience, wonderful forbearance, and mercy. And, notwithstanding, our views of an infinitely wise Providence, are narrow, short, and contracted; yet we shall find, on a minute examination, that “God is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works.”

THUS, having endeavoured to prove, that Moral Evil did not originate in the Deity; having answered some of the principle objections which have been urged against it's proceeding from a different cause; and shewn the futility of those schemes, which evidently tend to cast all the blame

blame on the *Moral Governor*; we will now seek after another cause, for the introduction of Moral Evil; and endeavour to account for it on other *principles*; *principles* which better correspond with the *nature* of the Deity, and the criminality of his creatures.—However, as Divine Revelation is silent, about the *cause* of it's *first introduction*, it does not become us to speak in a positive manner, while we endeavour to suggest the most probable, and rational way, for it's entrance into the *moral world*; a way which fully secures these two objects, the vindication of the *Divine conduct*, and the proper crimination of the *sinner*.

THE angels were created mutable, and so liable to change: nor do we know that it was possible in the nature of things, for the Divine Being to have made them otherwise: for, immutability is one of the distinguishing perfections of the Deity. Their minds, also, were *finite*, and therefore liable to *err*, or to form wrong notions of those subjects which were above their comprehension. We may rationally suppose, that a test of obedience was given them: in which, we have Adam, as an example.—We may also imagine, that their active minds were ardently employed in speculating on objects not clearly or fully revealed.—And, that themselves, and their creator, most probably engaged their attention in the first place. LUCIFER, whose intellect might have been more capacious than that of the rest, in his vehement pursuit after knowledge

knowledge, ruminating on incomprehensibles, such as, Divine, and angelic nature; &c. might have taken up a *false*, or *unworthy* idea of the Supreme Being. He might have doubted of his being *the Creator* of angelic nature;—of his *eternal existence*; of his *absolute independence*;—whether he had not *usurped an unlawful authority* over them;—whether he had *derived his existence* from the Deity; whether he was *dependant* on him for the *continuation* of that existence; and for his *happiness* while he did exist;—and whether he did not possess *independence in himself*, and so was free from obligation to any other. For, his intelligence concerning his own creation, depended on the veracity of God; which he might also question. He might have argued with himself thus. If *one Being* can *exist*, without a *cause*, why not *another*? If *one independant Being* can *exist*, why not *another*?—And, as he had no personal knowledge how he came into existence, he might have entertained doubts concerning this matter. ‡ Un-

O

worthy

‡ It is more than probable, that some of my readers may be disposed to ridicule these suppositions; and they may say, It is impossible that the angels should entertain a doubt of their dependence on the Deity, &c. For we ourselves are capable of perceiving these things, and can entertain no doubts, or scruples concerning them; and then how much more must angels have been capable of this in a more exalted state? This appears a very plausible objection. But have the objectors considered, that we first imbibed the notion of dependence on the Divine Being, through the channel of education? and that when we came to years of maturity, we endeavoured to investigate the truth of this proposition, impressed upon our minds from our very infancy, in a long train of reasoning by inferences and conclusions drawn from some established Axioms, established by another long train of reasoning, drawn from

worthy notions concerning God, and too exalted notions of himself, would naturally diminish his reverence, and lessen his esteem; they would cool his fervent love, beget indifference, make him less strict in obeying his Maker's will, and then, by degrees, lead him on to direct acts of rebellion.

IF we consider a Being, *mutable* in its nature, is there any thing so very wonderful in its *changing*? If we view a *finite, active, contemplative mind*, is it marvellous, that it should conceive *wrong notions* of objects beyond its comprehension? If *mistaken ideas* be entertained concerning *God* and *ourselves*, may we not naturally expect that they will produce their *proper effect*, i. e. lessen our estimation for him?—If a creature's conceptions of the Deity be debased, his opinion of himself will of course be raised; and then how can we expect that his reverence, and regard, should continue the same as before?

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from some other Axioms, &c. &c. And that if we had been trained up to manhood without any such sentiment, or an idea of those established principles leading to the confirmation of that sentiment, we might have found that much more difficult, and involved in doubt and perplexity, which now appears plain and easy, and to which our minds are accustomed to advert with ease, without the necessity of gradually arriving at it by slow degrees? In short, if the angels were not capable of erring, or forming wrong notions of the Deity, and of themselves, and their obligations to their Creator, they must have been infallible, and it must have been impossible for them to have committed sin.—But they sinned, which is a proof of their fallibility; and of their error in judgment, as well as in practice; though, it would be the height of presumption positively to assert, in what instance they erred, or began to err. I do not pretend to affirm anything, I only hazard my conjectures.

If his estimation of God be diminished, does it not tend to weaken his sense of obligation?—And does not this lead directly to disobedience?—Is not the indulgence of unworthy and unbecoming notions of the Divine Being, a swerving from duty?—And, can a pure created intelligence, lessen his esteem for his Almighty Maker, love him with less than supreme affection, and over rate his own excellency, by indulging an over-weaning self-conceit, and yet retain his original purity, and be guiltless? The moment that a rational creature acts thus, he violates the law of nature, and the fitness of things. The moment that he over rates his own excellency, and proudly neglects to ascribe it to his Divine Creator, he is guilty of that pride which borders on self-adoration; which is a sin of the first magnitude, and of the deepest dye. And how easily might all this come to pass, without, either the intervention of a super-natural power, or the exertions of a foreign agency.

WHEN *Lucifer* had formed wrong notions of God, of himself, and of his fellow creatures; and had entertained doubts concerning their relation to the Deity, dependence on him, and obligation to him; how easily might he have communicated these sentiments, and have insinuated to others, that the Divine Being assumed an Authority over them, which he had no right to exercise, and thereby have excited rebellion, both in himself and others; and thus have become, the first cause of transgressing

that law, which was given to angels, as a test of their obedience?—And while some suffered themselves to be influenced by his *allurements* to evil, and yielded to his suggestions, we have the greatest reason to conclude, that others resisted, and retained their integrity, making a glorious stand in the moment of temptation and trial; who were afterwards confirmed in Christ as a reward of their unshaken obedience. Some may object, that this sentiment does not correspond with our ideas of sovereign grace extended to angels, by which they were confirmed in Christ; for it represents this blessing, as the effect of merit, and not of grace. In answer to this objection, permit me to remind the reader, that every one placed in *a state of probation*, must be under a legal covenant, and not under a covenant of grace: that this confirmation might be a condition of the covenant which angels were under. But to place them under a covenant with such a condition, must have been an act of favour: for God might have continued them in *a state of probation* to all eternity; and then they would have been liable to have sinned, in any future period of their existence. To limit, therefore, the period of their trial, must have been an act of sovereign favour, and not of merit; and the objection, consequently, loses its force, and becomes nugatory. I do not pretend to say, that sin entered thus; but only suggest it as a probable way: and surely, there can be no great danger in supposing, that it might have entered after some such manner.

I am aware, that it may be objected by persons of opposite sentiments, that [these erroneous notions must have had a *cause*. The *grand Seducer* could not have formed these notions without *some object* or other exciting them : there must have been *some motive* to have induced him to think wrong, or else, why should it have come to pass : for, doubtless, he was created with a disposition to think right, &c. &c.—Therefore, there must have been a *cause* for this effect. In answer to this, and similar objections, I would observe, that the *cause* could not be any *real defect* in his nature ; for he was made as *perfect* as his nature would admit : had it been otherwise, then, he would have been an object of *pity*, and not of *blame*, as he did not create himself.—It could not have originated in God : for he cannot be the *cause* of *Moral Evil*, as we have fully shewn. It could not have existed in him, even *remotely* ; his nature being immaculately holy. He could not possibly have put a stumbling block in the way : *for he tempteth no man*. His placing them in a *state of probation* could not have been the *cause* ; for some of the *angels* fell not ; yet we have no reason to doubt of their being equally in a *state of probation*.

WE must, therefore, seek for the *cause* of *Moral Evil*, in the creature, and in those circumstances which we have before mentioned, viz. his *capacity* to *act* and *think* of himself, without the controlling agency of others, his *mutability*, and *liableness to err*, being finite and peccable.

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All these, taken together, will furnish a *sufficient cause* for the introduction of *Moral Evil*: for when we reflect, that the first transgressor had *ability to think* and act of himself, while God supported him in existence and in the free exercise of his intellectual powers: and while we connect with this, the ideas of *mutability*, and a *bounded capacity*, by which he was both liable to change, and to form wrong notions of incomprehensible objects, what should hinder us from concluding that he might have *sinned of himself*, without the aid of external causes, or a Divine interposition. And if it can be proved, that he might have sinned of himself, and from himself, then the point we are labouring to establish, is completely gained. But from the foregoing arguments, it plainly appears, that he might have sinned of himself, that no insurmountable obstacle was in his way; being created with full power to obey or disobey the will of God. There was no restraint laid upon him, but the denunciation of that *law* which he was made under; and the purity of his nature, which was mutable: and the light of his *understanding*, which, though clear and distinguishing, was nevertheless finite, and so liable to indulge wrong notions of objects beyond its comprehension. The first restraint might have been totally removed by unbelief, the second might have yielded to mutation, and the third might have been liable to have taken up matters inconsiderately, in a mistaken point of view.

IT is in vain to ask, What could induce him to change? How could this originate in himself, &c.? Had he not been endued with self motion, we should have been under the necessity of finding out a first moving cause: but here we have it in himself. To deny that he was *capable of transgressing of himself*, is to say that he was not *liable to err* from the path of duty, viz. of himself alone: and then, he must either have had a coadjutor in the act of sinning, or else he must necessarily have continued obedient. But who was that coadjutor? for he must have been both a *partner*, and a *superior*: yet, no such assistant existed, excepting *God*, whose nature is so abhorrent to sin, that he could not have aided his creatures in the act of sinning; for then the Divine Being must have been an associate with all his creatures, in all their horrid acts of rebellion against himself; which I should think no one will affirm. If the Divine Being had cooperated with his creatures, with a design to have enabled them to transgress his laws, that would have proved that he delighted in sin; an idea from which the human mind recoils with just indignation. For reason says, The *partner* in criminal actions, ought to be an equal sharer in the punishment.

THE angels must have had an ability, both to obey, and to disobey? else, to what purpose were they placed in a state of *probation*? How contradictory therefore to
reason

reason, and the nature and fitness of things, is it, to seek for a cause, not existing in themselves? To say, that some *external prior cause*, was necessary, involves in it the following difficulties. 1. That the angels were not capable of sinning of themselves, and therefore could not have been placed in a state of *probation*, which contradicts an undeniable fact. 2. That some Being, or other, must have used wicked artifices, to have influenced the first sinner to offend, which implies the pre-existence of a wicked agent, prior to the *first transgressor*; which is a contradiction in terms. 3. Or else, that the first sinner might have been contaminated by a *pure Being*, a greater absurdity than which, cannot well be conceived. 4. Or else, that the Divine Being must have *secretly laid a snare* to entrap him, and cause him to violate his laws; consequently, his transgression could not have originated in himself, according to this hypothesis: and if not in himself, he could not have been a criminal, and therefore, not a proper object of punishment. God has *punished the first sinner*; and therefore, we rightly conclude, that *he deserved punishment*: which brings it clearly to this, that the *first sinner* must have been *the Author of his own sin*. It must have *originated* in himself. Nor does this sentiment involve in it any *contradiction*. For a *mutable Being* may certainly *change* of itself.—A finite Being may undoubtedly err of itself, while speculating on objects too sublime for its comprehension.—That *error* may produce an *evil effect* on the mind, in lessening its esteem

esteem for the Supreme Being, and in alienating it's affections from Him: and as natural causes will ever have natural effects, so, that alienation of affection will eventually produce wrong conduct. For there is a close connection between sentiments and actions: between our opinion of the Deity, and our behaviour towards him. As a *finite capacity* may *err*, in forming a judgment, or in speculating on the Deity, or on creatures; there can be no necessity for seeking further for the cause of *Moral Evil*. From thence it may originate, and the Divine Being be eternally clear when he judgeth. For if he make a rational creature, it must be *finite, unstable, and peccable*: and therefore may without any *foreign agency*, or influence, deviate from the path of duty, and rectitude, and become a transgressor of the Divine Law.

THUS I have taken a survey of the *introduction of Moral Evil*; and though I presume not to affirm any thing, concerning the first offence; either as to what it was, or how it was committed; yet I hope it will evidently appear, to every unprejudiced reader, that sin might have been introduced, without God's having *absolutely decreed it*, and without the intervention of a *foreign cause*; which is the whole of what was intended under this article.

THE introduction of *Moral Evil* into our world, is particularly noticed in Divine Revelation: and we find that the *Serpent*, or *Satan* concealed in the *Serpent*,

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became

became the *tempter*. The temptation was powerful, and *Eve* the immediate subject of it, *rashly* and *inconsiderately* complied, without taking time to deliberate on the consequences, without either consulting her husband, or imploring direction from God. How far this *rashness* may be supposed to have been owing to herself, or whether she had any ability to resist, or to act differently, peculiarly claim our attention and enquiry. For, her transgression was either owing to herself, or to some *foreign agent*. She either had, or had not, a power to stand, all things considered.

IN the first place, we may suppose, that *Satan* acted entirely from himself, and not in consequence of any Order given him by the Deity: for it would be impious to suppose, that the *Moral Governor* would first commission him, and then condemn him, for executing his commands! Besides, such was the horrid perverseness and rebellion of his heart, that he would have refused to have obeyed any mandate from the Deity. Neither can we, with any propriety, indulge the idea, of the Almighty's prompting him to an act of wickedness; while we are assured from the highest authority, that sin is abhorrent to his nature. If it were inconsistent with the nature and perfections of the Divine Being to commission *Satan*, it must have been much more so, to have influenced the minds of our first Parents to comply with the temptation: and therefore, we may safely conclude, that *Satan* and *Themselves* were only concerned, in this transaction,

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IN the second place, it must be granted, that the Serpent either had, at all events, power to give efficacy to his artful scheme, or else it entirely depended on the will of our first Parents, whether they would yield to the temptation. If he had possessed such an absolute power over their will, as to deprive them of their resolution to resist, in that case, they would have been faultless, being in a state of necessity: for they would have been under the controlling influence of another, and not left to the freedom of their own will; and consequently, in an enslaved state before they had offended. But *Satan* had only the power to propose his temptation. And had they not power to turn a deaf ear: or to withdraw their eyes from the alluring object? Had not Eve the ability to advise with her husband, if she found herself over-matched by the subtil adversary? Might she not have paused awhile, and have examined the probability, or improbability of what the tempter affirmed? Might she not have consulted her own understanding, who was the fittest to be credited, the Creator, or a Serpent? Were all her mental powers instantaneously suspended? Though the fact proves, that she made but little resistance; it by no means follows, that she had not sufficient ability to withstand the trial: for if she had not full power to resist, wherein was she to be blamed for complying? The Divine Being never requires impossibilities of his creatures. He does not reap where he has not sown, nor gather where he has not sowed. If Eve had not power to

detect the *Deceiver*, had she not ability to have called in Assistance? She must have known, that it was her indispensable duty, not to do anything of such importance, without the concurrence of her husband: and therefore, it evidently appears to have been a sin of presumption. When Satan had proposed his temptation, it lay at her option, whether she would make the trial: nor had he any power to force her compliance. The act was entirely her own, and she might undoubtedly have refused, but did not: and therefore guilt and punishment were the fatal consequences. Satan was undoubtedly in fault: but if he had possessed absolute power over her, he would then, have been only in fault: but we find, that she was in fault, as well, and therefore, sentenced to suffer for her crime.

WHEN Eve had transgressed, was Adam necessitated to follow her example? Had he no ability to resist her solicitations? could he not have absolutely refused to comply with her request? It may appear strange, that he should suffer himself thus to be overcome: but the fact is indubitable; yet, might he not have withstood the temptation?—He either had, or had not, ability to refuse complying with her request. If he had not ability to refuse complying, his fall was a *pitiable misfortune*, that he could not avoid, and for which, he could not deserve punishment; for if he could not avoid it, he was in a state of *necessity*, and as such, his conduct was not the conduct of a *Moral Agent*; because, he that is in a state of necessity is not a
Moral

Moral Agent. The Divine Being *blamed* him for his compliance, and inflicted punishment on him ; therefore he had *ability* to refuse, though he neglected to exert that ability. But our opponents argue, as if the neglect to exercise an ability, amounts to full proof that there is no such ability, sufficient, to be exercised. And because that Adam complied, they affirm, that he had not power to refuse ; the motive was too strong for him to resist. It would be equally as good sense to say, that a stout healthy man has not power to walk to a distant place, because he chooses to ride. If it could be proved, that an active agent has no abilities, which he does not exercise, then, this mode of reasoning might amount to something ; but as every man's common sense informs him that he may have an ability which he does not exercise, it amounts to nothing.

SHOULD any say, that Adam could not exercise his ability, because, he wanted for inclination. It may be replied, if he wanted for inclination, it was either owing to himself, or to some other agent ; it could not be owing to another ; for no one but the Deity could take away his inclination, and we may be assured that He would not take it away : and if it was owing to himself, and his own wilful neglect, to exercise his thinking powers, and the omission of reflecting on the consequences of transgression ; then the fault was his own ; he had properly no one to blame but himself : and he
might

might have had inclination, if he had chosen to deliberate: therefore, it appears evident, all things considered, that he had power to stand. And on this ground *only*, can he be justly *criminated*. If he could not possibly have resisted, he was in a state of *natural necessity*, and as such, could neither be the subject of censure, nor responsibility for his conduct. But every sinners conscience, when awakened tells him, that he might have acted a better part and that the blame totally devolves upon himself. If therefore, it be as our opponents represent, that every man is in a state of *absolute necessity*, and that all their actions are unavoidable, every man's conscience is a false evidence; and mankind are under a *perpetual deception*. To prove the truth, or rather falshood of this strange absurd notion, let any man in a state of temptation, exert the powers of resistance, with which he is endued, and then he will soon find, whether he does not possess more ability than is commonly exercised, under such circumstances. Let him reflect on the dreadful consequences of sinning; let him divulge the matter to some faithful friend; let him earnestly implore the divine assistance, and he will be fully convinced that he is not in a state of *absolute necessity*, to follow the dictates of his vicious inclinations. * If mankind, after the fall, be
capable

* It is upon this principle that our penal Laws are formed, without this self agency, mankind might commit any depredations on civil society with impunity: because, as Necessarians, they could not be the Author of their crimes, and consequently not responsible.

capable of practising *self denial*, of reflecting on the direful effects of disobedience, of striving against sin, and of calling upon God for help; how much more must Adam have had this ability before sin entered! And therefore the fault of eating the forbidden fruit was entirely his own. Hence it appears manifest, that the introduction of sin was owing to, and originated in the first transgressors of the divine law; and that the Deity was not in any respect the cause of MORAL EVIL. Thus, I have endeavoured to prove that *Moral Evil* is a *real evil*, —That the Divine Being could not be the first moving cause of it.—That there is no absurdity in supposing that a *peccable probationary Moral Agent* might sin of itself. —That both angels, and man, in a state of innocence, had full power in themselves to continue obedient.—That their defection was from themselves, and therefore having sinned, they deserved, and received punishment from the hands of Divine Justice; which is no inconsiderable evidence of the truth of all the foregoing propositions: and now I will leave the point in dispute, to the judgment of every impartial reader, secure in my own apprehension that what has been offered on this part of the subject, will be deemed sufficient to confirm him in the full credit of the doctrine of *Moral Agency*, as it stands opposed to *Absolute, Physical, or Moral Necessity*, to which object I would now direct his attention.

P A R T. III.

On *Natural and Moral Necessity.*

S E C T. I.

NECESSITY DEFINED.

NECESSITY, according to some, has been distinguished, into *Physical, Moral, Simple, Relative, Antecedent* and *Concomitant*.

PHYSICAL, or NATURAL NECESSITY, is the want of a principle, an ability, or a means, necessary to act. Thus a man in a state of delirium, cannot exercise his reason. He who has a broken leg, cannot walk. And he who is under the absolute directing agency of another, cannot act of himself.

MORAL NECESSITY, is only a great difficulty, which is hard to be overcome; arising from long contracted habits, strong inclinations, or violent passions. Thus, a covetous man, can hardly perform a generous action. A Prodigal finds great difficulty in practising frugality.
And

And a man of a choleric temper, cannot easily exercise meekness, amidst ruffling circumstances.

SIMPLE OR ABSOLUTE NECESSITY, is nearly allied to *Physical Necessity*, depending not so much on any state, conjuncture, or the situation of things, as on some *invincible natural inability*, or *deficiency* in the subject; Such is the *Necessity* in a blind man, who cannot possibly distinguish colours.

RELATIVE NECESSITY, is that which places a man in a real incapacity of acting, or not acting, under those circumstances, and in that situation he is in; though under different circumstances, and in a different state of things, he might do either. Thus he who values his life when attacked by an highwayman, is under a *relative necessity* of parting with his money: He who has a propensity to evil of ten degrees, and a disposition to do good of five degrees, is under a *relative Necessity* to do evil: And he who has virtue of seven or eight degrees of strength, and only two or three degrees of concupiscence, to oppose it, is under a *relative Necessity* of doing good.

ANTECEDENT NECESSITY, is that which ariseth from some antecedent cause, necessarily operating on the subject.—Such is the necessity of the Sun's rising to-morrow morning.

CONCOMITANT NECESSITY, is that which ariseth from an antecedent cause, but depends on the circumstances of the effect. Thus it is necessary that a man sits, if he be fitting; i. e. till he changes his position.

Our present enquiries have only to do with NATURAL and MORAL NECESSITY.

PHYSICAL OR NATURAL NECESSITY, is that absolute certainty, which ariseth, either from some internal *physical impotency*; or from some external *physical cause, influence, or agency*, which renders the subject incapable of acting, or forbearing to act. And in this sense I use the Phrase, *Natural Necessity*.

MORAL NECESSITY, is that high degree of probability, which ariseth from the nature, inclinations, habits and connections of the *Moral Agent*. Thus, good men are under a *Moral Necessity* of doing good; and wicked men are under a *Moral Necessity* of doing evil, viz. It must be supposed a great difficulty for them to do otherwise. In this sense I use the Phrase *Moral Necessity*.

Mr. EDWARDS in his ENQUIRY into the freedom of the will explains *Moral Necessity* thus.—“ That Necessity
 “ of Connection and Consequence, which arises from
 “ such *moral causes*, as the strength of Inclination, or
 “ motives

“ Motives, and the Connection there is in many cases between these, and such certain Volitions and Actions. And it is in this sense that (*he says*) I use the Phrase, *Moral Necessity*, in the following Discourse.” page 29. And he affirms, *that Moral Necessity may be as absolute, as Natural Necessity. That the effect may be as perfectly connected with it's moral cause, as a natural necessary effect is with it's natural cause.* By *Moral Cause*, he means that which induceth the will to choose any particular line of conduct: that which influenceth a man to act as he does act; as, suppose a man to have been guilty of some crime, if you were to ask him, what induced him to do the wicked deed? And if he were honest enough to give you the true reason, that reason would be the Moral Cause. And the true Necessarian must maintain, that this Moral Cause is under the directing agency of the Deity; or which amounts to the same thing, he must believe that it is connected in a series of prior causes, the first of which is the sovereign will of the Deity; and that he has laid such a scheme of Providence, as effectually secures the performance of every action, and the bringing about every event, just as our eyes behold it, and that no action or event can possibly be otherwise than as it is. It is this idea of Moral Necessity that we have to combat. The self-same with Philosophical Necessity, the proper foundation of which, Doctor

PRIESTLY acknowledges to be Materialism. In his Preface to his doctrine of *Philosophical Necessity*, he says, "The doctrine of Necessity is a direct inference from Materialism."—page 17. and again,—“and least of all, had they (i. e. the heathens) any just idea of the proper *mechanism of the mind*, depending upon the certain influence of motives to determine the will; by which the whole series of events, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things, makes one connected *chain of causes and effects*, originally established by the Deity.” *ibid.* p. 22.—Agreeably to this are the sentiments of Mr. EDWARDS, who affirms, that,—“All Events whatsoever are necessarily connected with something foregoing, either positive or negative, which is the ground of its existence. It follows therefore, that the whole series of events is thus connected with something in the state of things, either positive or negative, which is original in the series; i. e. Something which is connected with nothing preceding that, but God’s own immediate conduct, either his acting or forbearing to act. From whence it follows, that as God designedly orders his own conduct, and its connected consequences, it must necessarily be, that he designedly orders all things.”

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As the principle Defenders of Necessarianism have been so explicit and open, I can be in no danger of mistaking their meaning, in the further prosecution of my researches after truth, as it respects the doctrine of necessity.

S E C T. II,

On, External Motives, and their Influence,

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Operative Agency on the Minds of Men.

THOSE Authors who have written in favour of the Doctrine of *Necessity*, have laid a considerable stress on *Motives*; and not without cause; for one main part of the argument rests upon the operative influence of *external objects*. They have considered *Motives*, as *Instruments*, or *secondary Causes*, by which mankind are held in a state of *absolute Necessity*; and rendered incapable of choosing any other line of conduct, than that which they adopt.

MOTIVES

MOTIVES are of various kinds, and arise from various objects; it would be endless to enumerate them all, if not utterly impracticable. We are told, that *Motives* are excitements to action, they are those circumstances which determine the will of Moral Agents to choose, or refuse; that no action can be performed without them; and that all actions are governed thereby; and hence it is concluded, that men's *volitions* are *certain*, and their *actions necessary*. The late Mr. Edwards of New England in his Enquiry says, "Every act of the will has some cause: and consequently has a necessary connection with it's cause: and so is necessary by a necessity of connection and consequence, which is evidently this. That every act of the will is excited by some motive." p. 117. He also supposeth that the strongest motive, upon the whole, will always direct the choice: and he suggests, that these *motives* are under the *certain directing agency* of DIVINE PROVIDENCE. Indeed if they were left to any other agency, their power over the human mind would not be certain. But all things are so ordered by *infinite wisdom*, that there is not a possibility of man's acting otherwise than he does: for the *motives* are too strong for his will to refuse a compliance! Adam could not continue in a state of innocence; because the motives which influenced his will, were so powerful, that he could not will to continue obedient! Cain could not

do otherwise than will to kill his Brother; because the motives, and every thing else, necessary to induce him to do the wicked deed, were so *ordered* and *connected* by infinite wisdom, that he could not resist the influence! For if he could, the *Inclination* and the *Will* were not certain; as Mr. EDWARDS affirms they are.

THUS having briefly laid before my Readers, their sentiments concerning *Motives*, who have written in favour of the doctrine of Necessity: We will now attempt an investigation of the matter for ourselves. —MOTIVES may be distinguished into two Classes, *External* and *Internal*. Let us take a view of EXTERNAL MOTIVES. EXTERNAL MOTIVES, are Objects of sense; such as; Riches, Honours, and Pleasures, Power, or Dominion, &c. Whatsoever offers advantage, or gratification, will fall under this Class of *Motives*, as they are called; because they are supposed to have some Influence on the mind, and to possess a power of exciting or awakening the Attention. These *Motives* are addressed to our sentient faculties; and we are said to do nothing without them. Let us then examine how far *External Motives* have the *Influence*, which has been attributed to them.

1. IF *external Objects* possess an influence over the human mind, they must have some ability to attract the notice, and incline the will. I readily grant that they have a property by which they can announce themselves present. But have they any ability to command attention. or incline the will? To answer this enquiry, it may be proper to ask, whether the same object possesses the same uniform ability to engage the attention, and to influence the will of every man? Making allowance for the different contexture of the sensible Fibres.

UPON a close investigation of this matter, it appears that the influence which attracts the attention of the mind, in many instances, depends upon circumstances, that bear no relation to sensible objects, and are so far from existing in them, that they are wholly seated in the mind; such as, *Love of Novelty, Curiosity, Inclination, Leisure, &c.* The *Love of Novelty* may induce a man to gaze upon a strange object, should it happen to catch his Eye. *Curiosity* may call up the attention, when some extraordinary object is present. *Inclination* to an object will have the same effect; and *Leisure* may dispose a man to pay attention to trifles, about which a man of business would not hinder himself a moment. But should all these be wanting, where then is the power of the object to attract the attention of the mind? It can have no such power under these circumstances:
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which sufficiently proves, that the *Motive* which calls up the attention is not in the object, but in the mind; or in the above-mentioned circumstances. And if the *Motive* which excites attention be not in the object, then the object possesses no such power as that of absolutely engaging the attention of the mind.

IF the object have no ability to rouse the attention of the mind, how much less has it a power to influence the will? For the very same object which is supposed to induce one man to choose the promised good, will have a diametrically opposite tendency on another: and in presence of the object, while one is willing to embrace it, another rejects it with disdain. Those objects which are supposed to produce the strongest effects, yet, when presented to a mind, destitute of a disposition to receive them, either produce no effect at all, or quite the reverse of that which they are supposed to produce on the minds of others. For instance, should some low-lived diversion present itself, while the vulgar would be eagerly flocking to enjoy it, the seriously disposed would probably turn from it with disgust. But, *the rude, or barbarous diversion*, as much contributes to drive the one, as to draw the other. For though different, and opposite effects, cannot be produced by the same cause; yet, one effect is as much to be attributed to the *external object* as the other: in fact, the cause in both instances, is in the *temper*

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and *disposition* of the *mind*, and not in the *external object* : that being no more than *the occasion*.—It appears, also, from experience, that the recollection of an object shall have nearly the same effect upon the mind, as the presence of it, and shall excite as strong a desire of enjoyment. In this case, where is the *Motive*? It cannot be deemed to be in the object's presenting itself, because the object is not there ; But the mind, as it were, conjures up an object, and is as much enamoured with, and as cordially embraces the phantom, as if it was real. Which in my opinion is a further proof, that the *Motive* is in the mind, and not in the *Object*.

2. IF the *external Object* had positive influence, it might be supposed, that it would induce those to choose the promised good, who have no prior innate disposition : but this is rarely or never the case. It may be objected, that in some instances, persons are attracted by objects and entertainments which they never before saw or tasted, and did not so much as know that they had any constitutional relish for such enjoyments. In answer to this, it may be sufficient to say, the object of entertainment is a Novelty. —Have such persons no disposition to Novelty? Should this be denied ;—May not a man have a capacity for relishing an object, and that capacity remain in a dormant state, for want of an opportunity to call it forth? for instance, a man may have a taste, capable of relishing
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Turtle, but he cannot possibly know that he has, till he has partaken of it. But does Turtle give him a new appetite, or taste? No power but the Creator's can change our natural inclinations and averfions. If therefore, a man may have a fenfative appetite, or relifh, and yet remain ignorant of it, till an occafion offers, fuitable to difcover it: why may he not, by the fame parity of reasoning, poffefs a moral, or immoral capacity, or inclination, and yet remain unconfcious of it, till an occafion offers for difplaying itfelf? This appears to have been the cafe with *Hazael* before *Elijha* anointed him to be king over *Syria*, when the prophet foretold what he fhould do to the kingdom of *Ifrael*, faying: " Their ftrong holds wilt thou fet on fire, their young
" men wilt thou flay with the fword, and wilt dafh their
" children, and rip up their women with child." To whom he replied, " But what, is thy fervant a dog that
" he fhould do this great thing?" (2. Kings, 3. 12. 13.) Our bleffed Saviour fuggefted the fame truth, when he faid to his difciples, " Ye know not what manner of
" fpirit ye are of." (Luke 9. 55.) This he faid, when they thirfted after power, in the Church on earth. Is it not therefore highly reasonable to conclude, that when a man finds a ftrong inclination to choofe an object he never before met with, that there is something in it fuitable to his nature, which exifted in him prior to it's being prefented to his view? Otherwife we fhall be obliged to

conclude, that *external objects* have the power of creating new dispositions in the human mind; the absurdity of which is too glaring to be admitted.

WHERE there is no prior innate disposition to the promised good, *external Motives* fail in their influence, except in some cases, when the party is moved by *curiosity*, or a *disposition* to *oblige his friend*. Would it not therefore be more proper to call *these external objects*, and *circumstances*, *Occasions*, rather than *Motives* possessing influence? *Occasions* offered to the mind for gratifying some innate disposition or appetite. The mind perceives an opportunity for indulging an habit, disposition, or appetite, which it had before: and no sooner perceives, than embraces it with eagerness. But is it a fair mode of reasoning to assert, that if the *object* had not been presented, the mind would have remained inactive; and that therefore the *object* was the cause of the minds acting? When it must be self evident, that the mind only waited for a convenient season, to gratify a *latent disposition* or *habit*. And in many instances, it goes in search after the enjoyment. Is it right, therefore, to affirm, that the *opportunity* is a *Motive* that possesses influence, and exercises an *active agency*, on the mind; and that it is the cause of that gratification? Would it not rather be proper to say, that the *disposition*, or *habit* is the *cause*, or *reason*, which induceth the will to choose such particular kinds

kinds of enjoyments, and entertainments? The *Motive*, therefore, that impels the will to act, is in ourselves, and not in the *external object* presented to view. For had there been no such disposition, the mind would not have *chosen the Object*, or *Enjoyment*, though presented—The *Object*, or *Enjoyment* cannot *create* a disposition that does not pre-exist—But, does not the *cause of choosing*, exist in the disposition? The mind's not acting when the *external Object* is absent, may be thus accounted for; the mind perceives, that it would be to no purpose to seek its own gratification, when circumstances are such as to preclude the possibility of enjoyment; and will not therefore labour in vain. It is the *prospect of succeeding*, that induces the mind to act conformably to the *internal latent disposition*: which fully proves, that the *Motive* is in the mind.

3. BUT, even, when there is a *disposition*, and an *opportunity* for gratifying *that disposition*, the mind may choose whether it will *embrace* the opportunity, from its own ability to judge of the expediency, or inexpediency of gratifying inclination, at that time, and under present circumstances. To deny this, is to set aside the utility of reason, and judgement, to direct a man what line of conduct is the most proper for him to pursue.

IF we are necessarily governed by inclination and habits, the use of *reason*, and *judgement* is entirely set aside, in the choice of entertainments, employments, and enjoyments; and they only serve inclination, to devise ways and means for gratifying its wishes, or to effect the resolutions of the will; but they do not assist in forming those resolutions; nor is it of any service *to consult the understanding* in the choice of employments, or enjoyments; or whether we shall embrace the present occasion, if we are *under an absolute necessity* of following the impulse of inclination. But I trust it will appear, to every unprejudiced mind, that mankind are not under the absolute rule of inclination: and that in some instances we are capable of practising self denial.

IF, therefore, *inclination* and *opportunity* united, cannot secure the will's adopting such a particular line of conduct, it must consequently follow, that what ever *Influence, external Objects* may be supposed to have upon the mind, when in a suitable disposition; yet the *principle* that *determines* the mind must be in it self, and not in *outward objects*. For, when an *external Object* is presented to our view, have we not from experience repeatedly proved, that we have power, not only to reflect on the propriety of embracing, but also to turn away from the object, and shut up the avenues of sense
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against its every sollicitation? Is not this exemplified in a poor man with strong sympathetic feelings, when implored by the needy? He recollects his own circumstances, and the calls of his numerous family, who have the first claim upon his liberality; and with tears of grief and commiseration reluctantly turns from that misery, which to relieve, would be an act of injustice to his own offspring. This is not less exemplified, in the reverse of this character; the covetous Miser, when addressed by his suffering fellow mortals, turns away his eyes, and ears, from one of the most powerful of *external Motives* to acts of beneficence, lest he should be induced to part with some of his worldly pelf.—Thus, though it were allowed, that *external Motives* may have some *influence* upon the mind, yet it is clearly evident from the above examples, that they have no absolute dominion over it; and this I presume is altogether sufficient to set aside the arguments of our opponents, drawn from *external Motives*, in favour of *absolute Necessity*.

IF *External Motives* have not absolute rule over the mind, then it is not necessitated to choose the promised good. If they cannot infallibly direct the will, in every instance, to adopt that line of conduct, which they are calculated to promote, (to speak in the language of our opponants,) then they are utterly incapable of securing *the certainty* of actions: for if they only fail to effect the will,

will, in one instance, out of ten, or a much greater number, they are but a bad foundation, on which to build the certainty of actions and events.

LET us now enquire whether *external Motives* possess any degree of influence? And whether they do really operate upon the mind, in any measure? It is said, that every external object, acts upon the sensible Fibres, and these influence the mind, and compel the will to choose that which they dictate. That *external objects* in general, possess a certain quality, which is calculated to make impressions on the organs of sense, cannot be denied.—Every visible object has a property, by which it is able to affect the optic nerve.—Every tangible object possesses a property that renders it capable of being felt.—Every object of smelling may act upon the olfactory nerves.—Every object of taste, may affect the gustatory nerves.—Every object of sound, is capable of striking the auricular nerves.—Lightening, Thunder, Tempests, Inundations, Earthquakes, &c: are strongly calculated to excite terror: so likewise are poisonous animals; as the Viper, the Scorpion, the Rattle-snake, &c. together with beasts of prey, such as the prowling Wolf, the fierce Tyger, the furious Lion, the savage Hyæna, &c.—Other objects are supposed to excite pleasure and delight.—Others to create desire.—This object exciting one passion, and that another.—But is it really so, in the nature of things; or
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does this arise from some other source? Query, if we had never heard of the damage done to mankind, or the danger they are in, from the effects of Thunder and Lightning; and were we entirely free from a sense of having offended the Moral Governor: would Thunder and Lightning excite terror, as well as amazement? They might shake our nerves, but I cannot perceive that we should feel the *sensation of terror*: for, if I am not mistaken, terror arises from a combination of several ideas: the idea of danger, and the idea of having deserved punishment, the consequence of sin; which must of course strike terror to the guilty mind: and except we allow of original ideas, we must take into consideration, also, those reports of damage done by these instruments of divine vengeance, or our having been eye witnesses of their destructive effects. But if it were otherwise: what has this to do with morality? Not any thing. Let us then examine the influence of those objects which are supposed to excite sinful desires, and are stiled causes of transgression.

INEBRIATING Liquors have been supposed to be of this denomination—But observation and experience fully evince, that they have not the least impulsive force upon the will of him who is in the habits of sobriety: and if he could enjoy them as freely as he does Spring Water, he would never find the least inclination

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to exceed the bounds of moderation, though he may have as good a taste and relish for the flavour, as he who indulges to intoxication. If this be granted, as I apprehend it will: where then is the operative *Influence* of inebriating liquors on the human will? It cannot be in them abstractedly considered; for then they would have a similar *Influence* on all men: yet it is well known, that they only *Influence* such who have a propensity to inebriety. And does not this prove, that the cause of excess is not in them, but in the disposition? A drunkard is disposed, if he has an opportunity, to indulge his inclination. And plenty of his favourite drink gives him this opportunity. But how does this prove that it has an *active agency*, by which it *operates* on the will, and *constrains* men to *choose* their own bane? The eye and taste of the sot distinguish the goodness of the liquor, and his proneness to intoxication induces him to drink to excess. In my opinion it is idle to impute his drunkenness to the liquor, as *the active cause* of his crime; though it may be the means of it; for the *active cause*, is *a disposition to drink to excess*: and the liquor can only be deemed *an occasion*, or *an opportunity*. And to say, if the liquor had not been there, he would not have been drunk, does not invalidate our argument, as it is not in point. The drunkard is moved and influenced by his own lust, and therefore when there is no object present to gratify him,
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he goes in quest of it; which shews that *lust* is the cause. This appears to have been the sentiment of the apostle James, "Let no man say when he is tempted, "I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man his tempted when he his drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." This is the source, whence all temptations arise; it is a man's being drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. "Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin." (see Jam. 1. 13. 14. 15.) And except *External Objects* can be proved to have the power of begetting lust in the mind, all that can be said by our opponents will amount to nothing. We have already proved, that *External Objects* have no power to change the disposition, and therefore rightly conclude that they are destitute of *effective influence*.

THE same mode of reasoning will apply to every other sensual enjoyment. But it may be urged, that if sensual enjoyments have no power to influence the will to choose that which is evil, is there no *operative influence* in *persuasion*, *irritation*, *provocation*, and the like? And may not the will be influenced by these? —When another attempts to *persuade* one into any measure, does he not endeavour to represent that it will be an *advantage to comply*; that some *good* will result from thence? And when the will assents, is not *that com-*

pliance owing to a desire after the *proposed* good? And if so, *the motive* that induces the will to comply, is not an *external*, but an *internal motive*? We *listen* to the proposal, because, we have an inclination to enjoy the *promised* good. I allow, in some instances a man may do that which he does not entirely approve, because, he wishes to *oblige* his friend, and then, *obliging* his friend is the good that induces his will to choose. — Yet still, *the motive* is in himself: *there* is the spring of his actions. But if the *motive* be in himself, then, *persuasion* is only the *accident*, or *occasion* of the will's compliance, and not the *real cause*; for *that* is certainly a *disposition* to enjoy the *proposed* good. If *that* good had been presented to his mind in any other way, his will would have embraced it. The *art* of *persuasion* then, is nothing more than discovering to the mind, which way it may gratify itself the most: and, therefore, is ever ineffectual, when it presents nothing that is suitable to the disposition of the mind, or that is approved by the understanding.

WHEN men are provoked and irritated by the language of others, are the *words heard*, the *cause* of that irritation, or does it proceed from some other motive? To examine this matter, let us imagine the bitter expressions levelled at an *hated*, or *despised* object, and then, they are so far from offending, that they may tend to please: and does not this clearly prove, that the cause of
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anger is self-love, or pride? The mind perceives itself to be injured, and then is offended—An innocent character is aspersed, and a *sense* of truth and *justice* *resents* the injury. It is in vain to say, if no such thing had happened, the mind would have been at rest; for in that case the mind would have had no object to exercise its powers upon. The offensive words were an *occasion*, but not the *active cause*: for we know by experience, that we have the power to *suppress* our *resentment*, when we perceive it will be more to our advantage than to indulge it: which proves, that the *motive* which produces action, is *in the mind*, and not in the *external object*: or at least *not so* in the external object, as *to cause* the will to *choose* either this, or that; much less to lay it under an *absolute necessity*.

THAT *External Objects* are not *active causes*, but *occasions* of *Moral Evil* only, may be also concluded from the following instances. The Jews were offended with our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: but can any one prove, that the *active cause* of offence was in him, or that he did, or said any thing, that was not perfectly right and fit, or that gave *just cause* of offence? Is it right to lay their wicked malice and envy at his door? Or was there any thing in his character, the Constitution of his Person, his Office as Mediator, his Miracles, his Doctrine, and his manner of Life, that could be an *active*

Agent

Agent, to impel, or influence the minds of men to sin against God; or that had the least *active tendency* that way? Surely not. God forbid, that we should charge their sin upon him, his purity and perfection! He was nothing more than the *innocent occasion* of their wickedness: the *cause* was in *themselves*, and not in Him.—Cain slew his Brother, because his works were righteous. But, can it enter into the mind of any sober thinking person, that *Abel's righteousness* should be the *active cause* of Cain's murdering him. It was no more than the *innocent occasion*, the *cause* was his own wicked envious disposition.—The Gentiles wickedly persecuted the Ambassadors of peace, sent to them by the gracious providence of a merciful Redeemer, on purpose to teach them the way of salvation, and reconcile them to an offended God: and yet they opposed to the uttermost of their power, the reception of the Gospel Revelation; and had it been possible, they would have totally extirpated the doctrine of Christ. But was *this merciful dispensation* from heaven the *cause* of their wickedness, or the *occasion* of it only? Was not the *cause* of it in *themselves*? And is it right to ascribe it to that, which was designed for their eternal good?—From these, and many other instances, I trust, it will appear to every unprejudiced reader, that *External Objects* have no *active Agency* on the minds of men, so as to determine the Will, to choose that

that which it is not naturally disposed to make choice of, should an occasion or opportunity offer.

SOME may object Eve's temptation, to what has been advanced above, and say. If external objects and persuasions have no active influence, how came she to listen to the temptation? As a creature of limited capacity, Eve was liable to deception: and we may safely allow, that in Satan's mode of reasoning, there was an active agency, calculated to deceive her unsuspecting mind, and to influence her to believe, that which was not true. He proposed the attainment of a good, that was suitable to a disposition within her, i.e. *Emulation*; but he deceived her: for the good proposed, was not attainable in that way which he recommended. In deceiving her, he may be considered as the *active cause* or *agent*. But the *Motive* that induced her to eat of the forbidden fruit, was a *desire* after an *higher state of existence*, and not the object set before her, the fruit of the tree. Should any say, It was the fruit that excited in her, a desire to eat: for it is said, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, &c." (Gen. 3. 6.)—There is no doubt to be made concerning the suitability of the fruit to gratify the sensitive inclinations; it had a pleasing appearance to the eye, the fruit looked fine, and
good

good for food; her appetite, may, therefore, be supposed to desire it; but the motive to eat, was that mistaken idea she had received from the Serpent, *that it was a tree that would make her wise*; and a desire of wisdom seems to have been *the Motive* that induced her to eat of the forbidden fruit, consequently, *the Motive* for eating was neither in the *Tree* nor in the *Serpent*, properly speaking.

Mr. EDWARDS, for the purpose of securing his argument, very craftily makes up a cause of actions from various circumstances, compounding Inclinations, Occasions, and Opportunities, previous Dispositions; present Objects &c. &c. But, notwithstanding this artful method, it is easy for the unbiaſſed mind to perceive the unreasonableness, and absurdity of attributing agency to passive Objects: and infallible influence to that which is destitute of sensibility. O man! how art thou debased, who, though constituted Lord of this lower world, yet, art under the governing influence of stocks and stones! This is indeed turning the world upsidedown, and inverting the laws of order. The chief cause of actions, are ascribed to insensible inert matter, or mere passive objects and sensual enjoyments; and sensible rational beings, of the most active kind, are reduced to a passive state, to be wrought upon by every surrounding object!

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AND it further deserves our consideration, if we were to grant a measure of influence, or active agency to *the Tree*, and to *the Serpent*, (for the sake of argument,) whether, even then, Eve had not power, in herself, sufficient to have refused a compliance? Had she no power to call to her husband, and consult him on this momentous occasion? No power to postpone eating, till she had considered the matter better?—Could she not have retreated from the tree, and from the tempter?—For what influence could bind her, but self-love, and a spirit of emulation?—It appears to me, that she might have done either of these things: and that she might have *denied herself*: for it was *herself* she had to struggle with, after she had credited the report; and neither the *Serpent* nor the *Fruit*; for they had *no absolute power or influence* over her mind. It was the *idea of being wise*, that entangled her, and induced her to eat. But might she not have *denied herself*? If not, she was much weaker in a state of innocence, than some of her fallen posterity have been, when only aided by nature.

FROM the foregoing modes of argument, we may venture safely to conclude, that every man's motive to action is *in himself*, and not in *external objects*; and that *external objects* are only *occasions* or *opportunities* for self gratification, laid in the way, as trials of our obedience: and their being seen by us, very much depends on

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our attention: if not seen, their supposed influence on the mind is entirely prevented: should they be seen, the inclination may not be in a suitable state for embracing them; yet were it so, reason and conscience may step forward, and prevent the Will from complying at that juncture: or, if every thing within be in a fit state, some circumstances from without, may intervene, and so prevent our gratifying an innate disposition. Yet upon the *infallible influence* of these *external objects*, some have laboured hard to lay the foundation of *absolute necessity*. But surely, if the *doctrine of necessity* be true: (and when applied to some objects, their motions and influence upon other objects, it may be true, yea, is undoubtedly true;) yet, it must have a better foundation to stand upon, than what men call *external Motives*: for *these*, without a divine agency, and the direction of an alwise providence, would but ill secure the *certainty* of actions and events. And I am aware, that while men plead for the *certain influence* of *external Objects*, they rest this *certainty* with the Divine Agency, and the Divine Decrees, which we shall consider under their proper head.

S E C T. III.

S E C T. III.

On INTERNAL MOTIVES.

IN the foregoing Section, having taken a distinct and extensive view of EXTERNAL MOTIVES, I will now turn the attention of my readers to the consideration of INTERNAL MOTIVES, and *their influence* on the Will, in the choice of objects, or employments.

To say, that a man acts without *Motive*, is to assert, that he acts *without reason*; for I consider *Internal Motives* as the *reason* of the souls willing in every circumstance of life. Ask a man, *why* he has chosen such a particular line of conduct; and if he be a man of any understanding, he will assign *his reason* for it, either good or bad, and *that reason*, is the *Motive* which induced him to walk in that track. But it is very probable, if we look narrowly into *this reason*, we shall find it principally to originate in *self-love*, or *self-gratification*: this being the spring of

action. He obliges his friend to gratify himself.—He denies himself of some enjoyments.—He lays himself out to promote a public good.—He serves his God, his Country, his Friends, and the interests of his Redeemer, with a view to *gratify himself*.—There is a leading principle in his mind, which naturally inclines him to do these things, and the doing of them, gives him pleasure. He takes as much delight in acting honourably, as others do in acting dishonourably; for every man acts agreeably to the disposition of his own heart, without the least degree of embarrassment: except, when an opportunity offers itself for gratifying several opposite inclinations at the same time; or when some passion of the mind is to suffer mortification; and under such circumstances there is a considerable struggle, and the Soul is perplexed, being at a loss to determine which inclination to gratify, and which to refuse. But the contest generally terminates in favour of that which is the most *predominant*: or is rather decided by *self-love*: for when the mind has compared, reasoned, and reflected upon matters, till it has discovered, in it's own judgment, which will contribute most to it's gratification; or what injury, or inconvenience it can best endure, it is no longer in a state of embarrassment, but immediately makes it's election.

THUS

THUS I hope we have found out *the Motive* that influences the will, under every possible circumstance; *self-love*: this is the *primum mobile* of every man's actions.—To persuade any man to adopt any particular line of conduct, we have only to convince him that it will greatly tend to his own benefit. This was the manœuvre by which the Serpent prevailed over Eve in the Garden. He persuaded her to believe, that eating of the fruit of the Tree of knowledge would be highly to her advantage.

UPON the whole it appears evident, that the *supposed influence* of *External Motives*, as they are called, depends upon the mind of man, his dispositions, habits, and the exercise of his reason, and especially on the understanding: for it is by it that we discern the suitability or unsuitableness of *external Objects* to gratify our inclinations, or self-love, and judge of the expediency or inexpediency of choosing the proposed good. As choice depends on the understanding, it is highly proper to enquire, what it is that directs it, by whom it is exercised, and whether it be infallible and immutable? For, on these circumstances, the certainty of actions and events, very much depends.—The understanding must be directed and exercised, either by ourselves, or by some other Agent. It may be a difficulty, to say, how the Soul directs and exercises this, or any other power which

which it possesses; but, that it does this of itself, may be proved by the following mode of argument.

IF the direction and exercise of the understanding be attributed to another, that other must be God: for it is not reasonable to suppose, that he would subject *one* of his rational creatures to the absolute direction of *another*, and the understanding of *one* intelligent being to the directing agency of *another*, which *other* must also be unable to direct itself.—Much less, would he commit that direction to *inanimate matter*, to which, agency cannot be attributed, in any wise.—If we attribute this direction and exercise of the understanding, to God; as he is immutable and immaculate, we may rest assured, that the exercises of the understanding would be uniform and right, there would be no darkness, no misconceptions; men would then see things in their true and proper light: and not sometimes in one light, and sometimes in another; and the perceptions of all men would be uniformly the same, so far as they should extend. For we cannot suppose that the Divine Being would mislead his creatures, and cause them to err from that which is right.—Or if he had seen fit, that the understandings of his intelligent creatures, should have depended on the laws of mechanism, then, so long as that mechanism should be continued in a proper state, the understanding could no more err than the planetary worlds;

worlds: and would no more mistake an apparent for a real good, than a well trained Harrier would mistake the scent of some other animal for that of the Hare; except we could suppose it in the power of him, who moves this wonderful machine, to change it's motion at his pleasure; but as it is God, who must do this, if it be done at all, we cannot conceive that he would direct it to a wrong motion and so be the efficient cause of our mistaken ideas, and thereby of leading us in the ways of unrighteousness.—From hence we are led to this conclusion, that if our understanding were under the direction of the Deity, then we should always think and judge aright in matters of morality, and perceive the way of virtue to be the only way of happiness, and the way of sin to be the direct road to misery: and being possessed of self-love, we should choose the way of happiness, and avoid that of misery.—But we find by observation, that mankind reject the way of happiness, and approve the way of destruction.—They do not act consistently with the idea of being under the directing agency of the Moral Governor; for wherever that is exercised, there are evident traces of divine wisdom; but the conduct of mankind, in a moral point of view, is made up of folly and absurdity: which shews, that the direction and exercise of the understanding, is not to be attributed, either to the Divine Being, or to the laws of mechanism, but to ourselves; and therefore the choice of objects, enjoyments, and employments, must be

be our own act, and ought not to be ascribed to a foreign agency; and *the Motive* to action must be in ourselves, and not in another.

IF then, we reflect on the fallibility and mutability of mankind, we are obliged to acknowledge that their understandings are fallible and mutable, as they are exercised by themselves: and therefore liable to disapprove that object to day, which they approved yesterday. And if the influence of external objects, and our choice of the proposed good, depend on the understanding, that being fallible and mutable, from whence can we derive the certainty of human actions and events? Not from external Objects, and their supposed Influence on the minds of men, for that depends on a mutable cause, and must therefore be mutable: nor on the stability of *Moral Agents*, for though they have *the Motive* to action in themselves, and are *properly Agents*, yet they are so mutable that no dependence can be placed in them, either as to their judgment or actions, that they shall correspond, to-morrow. with what they are to day.

FROM the view we have taken of *Motives* both *external* and *internal*, it appears, that *external Objects* possess no *real active Agency*, by which they can induce the minds of men to choose any particular line of conduct, or to embrace any present enjoyment, but *that which depends*
on

on the habits, inclinations and understanding of the *Moral Agent*.—That they have no influence over those who have not, already, an innate disposition to enjoy the proposed good: which shews that they have no real influence at all.—That Moral Agents have the power to refuse the good proposed, though suitable to their dispositions; by consulting their own advantage.—That every man's *Motive* to action, is in himself, and not in another.—That this *Motive*, when traced to its original, is found to be *self-love*.—That our choice of objects depends on the understanding, or the mind's perceiving that which is suitable to gratify Self-love.—That a defect in the understanding, or a want of discernment, sufficient to perceive that which will gratify this disposition, in the most rational and effectual way, is the reason why men frequently choose a real evil, under the mistaken idea of a real good.—That the understanding being exercised by a fallible mutable being, must be fallible and mutable too.—And that, therefore, certainty cannot be founded either upon *external* or *internal Motives*, or on both these united together.

UPON the whole, then, we may safely conclude, that the doctrine of *the certainty* of man's actions, must either be established on some more solid foundation, than that of the *Influence* of external Objects, and the immutability of the human mind, or absolutely fall to the ground: that the *Motive* which impels mankind to action, is not

an External, but an Internal Motive, and the advocates for absolute Necessity, have therefore laid too great a stress on External Motives, and mechanical Operation and Influence. And when ever they shall be disposed to reconsider the subject impartially, they will be obliged to confess, that the Will of a Moral Agent is not absolutely under the direction of a foreign power ; but that every such Agent, has the Principle or Motive in himself, that determines his own actions, which Principle or Motive, is exercised by himself, and not by another.

S E C T.

S E C T. IV.

An Attempt to prove that Mankind are not in a state of Natural Necessity, to transgress the Divine Law.

THE Advocates for *physical*, or *natural Necessity*, suppose that the *sensible fibres* are so constructed, as to be under an *absolute Necessity* of receiving *impressions* from *external sensible Objects*: these objects are presented by an alwise unerring Providence; the sensible fibres, are mechanically affected by them; they again make correspondent impressions on the Soul: *that*, reasons, loves, hates and wills according to those impressions, having no other mediums of intelligence, and being incapable of exerting itself without their assistance. Thus, through an immutable connection, between the presentment of external objects, by a Divine Providence, and the sensible fibres; and between the sensible fibres and the Soul, the Soul is placed in a state of *absolute physical Necessity*; and is incapable of acting in any one instance, but as it is neces-

farily directed by a divine agency, through the medium of *external Objects*.

THIS kind of Necessity seems to be nearly the same with Philosophical Necessity: which as Dr. PRIESTLY explains it, is a Necessity to act, just as we do act, every day of our existence; not having the power of doing several things, when all the previous circumstances are precisely the same. So that the choice or determination I made to-day, if exactly in the same circumstances, I should have done the same yesterday, and shall do the same to-morrow, or at any other time, and could not possibly do otherwise. He says, " There is some *fixed law of nature* " *respecting the will*, as well as the other powers of the " mind, and every thing else in the constitution of nature; and, consequently, that it is never determined " without some real or apparent *cause* foreign to itself, " i. e. without some *motive of choice*, or that motives influence us in some definite and invariable manner; so " that every volition, or choice, is constantly regulated, " and determined by what precedes it. And this constant " determination of mind, according to the motives presented to it, is all that I mean by its *necessary determination*. " This being admitted to be the fact, there will be a necessary connection between all things past, present, and " to come, in the way of proper cause and effect, as " much in the intellectual, as in the natural world; so " that

“ that—according to the established laws of nature, no
“ event could have been otherwise than it *has been, is,*
“ *or is to be,* and therefore all things past, present, and
“ to come, are precisely what the Author of nature
“ really intended them to be, and has made provision
“ for.” (Phi. Neceff. p. 8.)

According to this mode of reasoning, GOD must be the first moving cause of all the actions of all his rational creatures: and we are consequently wrong, while we attribute that kind of agency to them, which belongs to beings, who are justly answerable for their conduct, and are therefore, the subjects of praise and blame. Could our Opponents but make good their assertion, disputation would be at an end.—As mankind, according to their hypothesis, do nothing of themselves, it would be equally as ridiculous and absurd to impute moral good or evil to them, as to praise or dispraise a musical instrument, for that effect, produced by the agent’s playing on it, well or ill.

To evade the force of this reasoning, they alledge, that, as moral Agents act agreeably to their choice, in which they differ essentially from a machine; their actions must be their own, and, therefore, deserving of praise or blame. But upon their own plan of reasoning, by which they endeavour to prove, that the Will is directed by external Motives, wherein consists the difference between a man, and a machine that is moved by mechanical powers?

ers? Only take away the motive power, and the machine stops; being destitute of self-motion.—Apply this to the will of a rational being, which, though not moved by the same kind of power, yet is moved (according to the defenders of Philosophical Necessity) by those external objects, and circumstances, which a Divine Providence has appointed, as infalible motives, to excite it to make choice of such a particular line of conduct, and it cannot act without those motives.—And, if this be the case, wherein is the difference between a man and a machine? only this, that he is a rational machine: for it is plain from their hypothesis, that he can neither move of himself, nor act, without a foreign agency.—If put in motion, he would not be able to vary his actions, (according to Mr. EDWARDS,) but like the chimes of a clock, would require to be set to another tune; or being so constructed, would play such a number of tunes in rotation, and then return to the first, to perform the same round.—Or like an Æolian Harp would sound a number of fanciful Airs, dependent on the blowing of the wind. If a man cannot act of himself, he is no more than a machine; and to support this Hypothesis, Dr. PRIESTLY has endeavoured to prove the materiality of the soul. Nor is it possible to support Philosophical Necessity on any other ground. I am aware, that my opponents may quote passages of sacred Scripture to prove, that the Deity useth wicked men as instruments to fulfil the purposes of his good pleasure, as (Isa. 10, 5, 15,) “O
 “ Assyrian

“ Assyrian the rod of mine anger : and the staff in their
“ hand is mine indignation.—Shall the ax boast itself
“ against him that heweth therewith ? or shall the saw
“ magnify itself against him that shaketh it ? as if the rod
“ should shake itself against them that lift it up ; or as if
“ the staff should lift up itself, as if it was not wood.” If
God use wicked men as instruments, to fulfill his purposes, it is necessary to enquire how he does this ? Is it in the same manner that he would use a machine, impelling them by force : or, as he sometimes useth good agents, whom he constrains by a secret impulse ? Does he excite wicked men to acts of cruelty, and stir up their sinful dispositions, that they may perform those services, which execute his just indignation upon the workers of iniquity ? No, he only leaves them to follow the bent of their own inclinations, and removes every obstruction out of their way. Thus, while he suffered the Assyrian Monarch to follow the dictates of his own inclinations, his power sustained him, and his providence concurred to make the nations an easy conquest ; which had the Monarch been apprised of, it might have stopped his vain-glorious boasting, while he was accomplishing the designs of providence. And in this way, only, can we consider him as an instrument in the Hands of the Deity. And is it not much better, thus, to interpret the sacred writings, than to impute all his pride, wickedness, and oppression to a *divine impulsive agency* ? If he was not impelled by a *divine agency*, but acted from
himself,

himself, then, he was not a *mere instrument*, but an *agent*; and consequently, not in a state of *Physical* or *Natural Necessity* to do what he did; and therefore, the obliquity of his actions may justly be attributed to himself, but can with no propriety be imputed to the Deity. Yet it is clearly evident, to every man of common understanding, that if the *Affyrian Monarch* had been actuated by a *divine agency*, the blame of his conduct ought to have been ascribed to *that agency*; for *praise* and *blame* cannot belong to a *mere instrument*. Therefore while the Divine Being useth the agency of wicked men to accomplish his own designs, their *liberty* is not taken away, they are not *impelled*, but only *suffered to do wickedly*: they are *not made* to transgress, (for that is of themselves;) but their wickedness is overruled to subserve the wise purposes of the Deity. Their wickedness like water bursting from its spring, is guided and directed by a Divine Providence, to flow in such a channel, as he thinks most meet to suffer; but that Providence is not the cause of its flowing. Thus, this objection taken from a misapprehension of the word of GOD amounts to nothing more, than this, that the Divine Providence is concerned in directing the sinful conduct of mankind, to the accomplishment of proper Ends; but is not the cause of that conduct.

SOME of my READERS may think, I have confounded the two ideas, of *natural* and *moral Necessity*, in the foregoing

going Argument; and that I have not kept up the distinction between them. But *physical* or *natural Necessity* includes, not only *that necessity* which ariseth from some *internal physical impotency*; but that also which ariseth from some *external physical cause, influence or agency*, which renders the subject either incapable of acting, or of acting in a different manner. Whereas *Moral Necessity*, is that which ariseth from the *internal dispositions and inclinations, or habits of the Moral Agent*. That invisible agency by which, *Necessarians* suppose, mankind are invincibly and infalibly directed in all their movements, pendent on a concatenation of causes and effects, is altogether as *physical or natural*, as that by which the planetary worlds are rolled along in their revolutions, round their central Orb: And is very properly termed *Philosophical* by Dr. PRIESTLY; but can with no propriety be called *Moral Necessity*, because it has no dependence on the *Moral Agent*, for his will is wholly dependent upon that.

MANKIND are either under a *natural necessity* to do evil, or they are not. If they are, they were either created in that state, or else they were brought into it by some foreign Agent, or by their own conduct. If the first man had been formed in a state of *natural necessity*, it must have been, in a state of *necessity* to render obedience to the Divine Will, and then he could not have erred any more than the planetary worlds: he did err,

and this proves, that he was not *necessitated to continue obedient*.—He had no natural defect, either in the powers of his body, or in the faculties of his mind: he was not under *the absolute governing influence of external objects*; for we have already proved, that they have no *such influence*: and it would be one of the greatest absurdities, to suppose, that the Divine Being should make him under a *natural necessity of disobeying his own Laws*, which he commanded him to observe; and therefore, he could not be under a *Natural Necessity* of becoming disobedient.

HAD man been created in a state of *natural Necessity*, his actions would not have been of the *moral kind*, and as such they would not have been deserving either of praise or blame. His actions were of the *moral kind*, for they subjected him to punishment; and therefore he could not have been made in a state of *natural Necessity*.

He could not have brought himself into that state, without destroying the powers of the body, or the faculties of the soul: unless we conceive that this might have been effected *by contracting sinful habits, inclinations and affections*. It is true, when he had sinned against GOD, he was incapacitated for rendering a perfect obedience to the Divine Law, by reason of depravity:

vity: which incapacity is not a *natural*, but a *moral incapacity*; for he did not loose his natural abilities, but his moral inclination. And therefore, it does not follow from hence, that he was brought under a *natural Necessity* to commit sin; much less to commit just such particular acts of sin, and no other. In this sentiment I have the countenance of Dr. PRIESTLY, who writes thus upon the subject, “ In the first place, I “ would observe, that I allow to man all the liberty, or power, that is *possible in itself*, and to which “ the ideas of mankind in general ever go, which is “ the *power of doing whatever they will, or please*, “ both with respect to the operations of their minds, “ and the motions of their bodies, uncontrolled by “ any foreign principle or cause. Thus every man is “ at liberty to turn his thoughts to whatever subject “ he pleases, to consider the reasons for or against any “ claim or proposition, and to reflect upon them as “ as long as as he shall think proper; as well as to “ walk wherever pleases, and to do whatever his hand “ and other limbs are capable of doing.” And therefore, *even this pravity of nature*, did not render his future actions any the more certain or necessary, than they were before the fall. While in a state of innocence, he had an ability to perform a great variety of actions, and yet continue in the line of duty: and after he had lost his innocence, he had ability to perform a greater variety

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of actions, and yet continue in the line of disobedience. So that sinning against GOD, could not bring him into a state of *natural Necessity*, to walk in such a particular track and no other.

WE cannot conceive, that any Being, besides GOD himself, should be able to bring him into a state of *Natural Necessity*, except in cases of force and violence; because, none other, have an independent controlling power over him. The Divine Being, neither has, nor does, bring his intelligent creatures into a state of *Natural Necessity to commit Sin*; for that is inconsistent with his nature, and moral rectitude: and, if he had brought them into a state of *natural Necessity* to obey his Will, we may be assured, that they could not have erred from the rule of righteousness. We therefore conclude, from this mode of reasoning, *that mankind are not in a state of Natural Necessity; but act as free Agents*: if we understand *Natural Necessity* to consist in a want of ability, or means to enable them to act a different part. For before the fall, if man had been under *Natural Necessity*, either from a Divine Agency, or from his natural make, it must have been a necessity to obedience, and not to sin. But he was capable of either; and therefore could not be in a state of *Natural Necessity*. And since the fall, though mankind are incapable of perfectly obeying the will of GOD, because of depravity; yet they are *not in a state of Natural*

Natural Necessity to commit such particular acts of sin; because they are *not actuated by an immutable foreign agency*.—There is no such agency existing but GOD's, and *that cannot be exerted to secure sinful actions and events*.—Therefore, mankind are not in a state of *Natural Necessity*, under the fall.

If any suppose, that *Natural Necessity* might have arisen from the *influence of a foreign agency*, which could not be resisted: it may be observed, that prior to the introduction of sin, there could be *no foreign agency but GOD's*: and that agency being only *pure and holy*, it could never have laid his pure creatures under a *Necessity* of committing sin. Should it be said, man was not compelled to sin against his Will; but *his Will was infallibly secured by a foreign agency*, which he could not resist, and therefore, he must have been in a state of *Natural Necessity*. I must confess, there appears to be no essential difference, between a man's being compelled to act, whether he will or no; and his being under a *Natural Necessity*, of willing to choose a particular line of conduct, from *the irresistible influence of a foreign agency*: for in both instances, he must be deemed in a state of *natural Necessity*. But when *choice proceeds* from his own *inclination, reason or judgment*, without being compelled by a foreign agency, then he acts as a free Agent. That which we have to examine, then, is this, was man in a state of *natural Necessity* to transgress

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transgress the divine Law, from an *irresistable foreign agency*, which rendered it impossible for him to avoid sinning against GOD?

IF man had been under a *natural Necessity* to sin against GOD, arising from the influence of an *irresistable foreign agency*, that agency must either be attributed to the Divine Being, or else to the Serpent. We have already proved, that *the Divine Agency* could not have been applied to such an unrighteous purpose. And, therefore, man must either have been under the Serpents agency, or otherwise in a state of Liberty. Was the Serpent, or Satan in the Serpent possessed of such an agency? Was he able to exercise a *compulsive agency* over the will of our first Parents? If he was, why had he recourse to Stratagem, to deceive the Mother of mankind? If we had no other argument, to prove him to have been destitute of such an agency, this is sufficient, in my opinion. It does not correspond with our ideas of a creature, to suppose him possessed of an agency, by which he can act upon the will of another at his own pleasure, so as to reduce him to an *absolute Necessity, of doing either good or evil*; the utmost that a creature can do, is either to use persuasion or to compel by external force. Should any one say, *Persuasion* subjected our first parents to a *natural Necessity* of transgressing the Divine Law, and that they were not able to avoid being willing to choose their own destruction.

tion. I answer, could not our first Parents have withstood the temptation? Could they not have reasoned on the matter after this manner.—Who is the fittest to be credited, a *creature* or the CREATOR? Had they not light enough to have perceived this? And if they had, might they not have exercised it? Could they not have paused awhile, and have seriously considered consequences? Or had they no power to discern, that they were at least, changing a certainty for an uncertainty? Had they called in reason, and conscience to their aid, surely they might have detected the Serpent, and have seen through his artful devices: and if they neglected to exert those powers, with which they were endued, and rushed precipitately forward without deliberation, whom had they to blame but themselves? But if they were made so far inferior to the angelic order, as to lie absolutely at the mercy of any one of those fallen Spirits, who might choose to assault them with temptation, they could not be deemed culpable for falling into that snare, which they had no power to escape. If they were under a natural Necessity of sinning, and could not avoid it; or if their Will's were so effectually secured by a foreign agency, that they could not have refused choosing their own bane; a righteous judge would not have condemned them, any more than a Parent would condemn his child, for falling into a snare, which was laid for him by some malicious person. GOD is a righteous Judge; he condemned our first
Parents;

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Parents; they were not able to say, they could not have done otherwise; and therefore it is reasonable to conclude, that they were not in a state of *natural necessity*; not destitute of ability, and means, to have acted a different part; for they were in the full possession of all their natural powers, both of body and mind, and were under no natural inability, to think and act, as rational Moral Agents.

S E C T.

S E C T. V.

An Enquiry, *whether Mankind were made in a state of Moral Necessity to sin against God.*

I do not deny *moral Necessity*, when it does not include in it the idea of *absolute Necessity*, or an impossibility of acting otherwise. Yet, I cannot conceive, that man was made in a state of *moral Necessity*, to transgress the Law of GOD.—I could much sooner believe, that he was under a *moral Necessity* to obey; for he had much more reason to continue obedient, than he could have for sinning. If by *moral Necessity*, we understand the infallible certainty of mans acting, in such a particular manner, attended with an inability to act otherwise; then, he could not have been created in a state of *moral Necessity*; because, that *Necessity* must have been, a *Necessity to act right*; he

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acted

acted wrong, which proves, that he was not made under *that kind of Necessity*. But if by *moral Necessity*, we only mean, an high probability, then, I think, we may suppose him to have been created in a state of *Moral Necessity*: for there was, undoubtedly, an high probability of his continuing obedient. He had a disposition to obey, a law was given him armed with terrors, a sanction that threatened the violation of it with death, and a promise of life if he remained obedient. *Moral probability* was, therefore, on the side of his continuing obedient; yet it did not amount to certainty, as the event fully proves.

THE Divine Being is in a state of *absolute moral Necessity*, to do that which is good only; and this is the perfection of his nature. Yet I think it would be an unwarrantable presumption, to say, that he is bound by necessity to do either this or that: for he must be at full liberty [either to act, or forbear to act, or else what is become of his Sovereignty.

FALLEN angels, and wicked men, may be supposed to be in a state of *absolute moral Necessity*, to do that which is sinful: for such is their depravity, that they cannot will to act otherwise: yet, I can see no reason to conclude, that they are obliged to commit such particular kinds of sins, and no other: for there may be instances, in which two different sins are equally easy to be committed, and alike grateful to the sinner, and then surely, he is at liberty to
make

make his choice.—And there must be some ability to exercise self-denial, in many cases; and to do some things which have the appearance of goodness.—This Necessity to act sinfully, ariseth from a moral inability to render a perfect obedience to the Law.—And is properly called depraved Necessity, and neither accords with Dr. PRIESTLY's definition of *Philosophical Necessity*, nor with Mr. EDWARDS' description of *Moral Necessity*.

BUT were we to grant, that man was made in a state of *Moral Necessity*, out of complisance to our opponents; it must have been a Necessity to continue obedient; for that was the disposition with which he was formed. Yet, how extraordinary a mode of reasoning, is that, which makes this Necessity an argument to prove, the unavoidable certainty of his fall, as some of them have attempted to do: but, by what kind of Logic, I leave every man of common sense to determine.

LET US now enquire, whether the introduction of sin brought mankind into a state of *Moral Necessity*, to transgress the Laws of GOD? If by *Moral Necessity*, an *high probability* be meant, then I think, it is manifest, that sin brought mankind into a state of *Moral Necessity*: for they have a natural disposition to do that which is contrary to the Divine Law: and, should they be brought into such a peculiar situation, by divine Providence, as to give them an opportunity for gratifying their depraved

inclinations, it is more than probable, that they would be disposed to embrace it. If by *Moral Necessity*, we understand, an utter incapacity to avoid sinning against GOD : then, I think, we may safely conclude, that mankind are in that state : for it is impossible in the nature of things, that a depraved being should do any otherwise than sin : if he act at all, it must be sinfully, because the Law of nature requires him to love GOD with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself : but darkness itself may as soon emit a lucid ray, as enmity fulfil the Law of love. This is not owing to any *natural inability*, in man, to do that which the law requires of him ; but to a want of inclination : which some have called, *a moral and criminal inability*. But, if by *moral Necessity*, an *absolute Necessity* to pursue such a particular track, be intended, or to perform such particular acts, and no other, then I think, it is impossible that any man should be under that *kind of Necessity*, and yet remain a *Moral Agent*. This, however, appears to be *the Necessity* pleaded for, by our antagonists.—Are mankind then under this kind of *Necessity*? To prove the affirmative, our opponents say, that we are actuated by *Motives* : and in cases, where motives of opposite influence, and to opposite enjoyments, present themselves to the mind, the *strongest motive* prevails over the will, and governs the choice ; nor is it possible to resist the influence. It must be confessed, that every rational being acts from motives : i. e. Some con-
sideration

sideration or other, weighs with the mind, and is the reason why a man chooses to act as he does : for it would be strange indeed, if a rational Being should act without reason, or without inducement ; but we have already proved, that this reason or inducement is in himself, and not in external objects.—SELF-LOVE, an idea of some advantage, an inclination that wishes to be gratified, curiosity, &c. &c. induce the mind to prefer those objects, which are presented to his view. But, how does this prove, that his actions are *absolutely necessary*, or, that he cannot walk in a different track ? Man is not immutable, as may be easily perceived from the variability of his conduct. As he is changeable, and so liable to alter his sentiments every day, concerning those objects, and enjoyments, with which he is continually conversant, the object that is supposed to have an influence on his mind to day, may have none at all to-morrow : and what then, is to secure his conduct ? *External Objects* cannot ; for they have abstractedly considered, no influence in themselves.—But were we to grant them all the influence that is pleaded for : yet it is well known, to every man, that except the mind be in a proper state, they effect nothing ; what then is to secure the mind in that state, a mind that is always mutable ?—So, that, whether objects have influence, or no, they, of themselves, cannot secure the certainty of a man's acting in such a particular manner. If, indeed, his disposition were uniform, it might require little more than
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the presentment of an opportunity for self-gratification, to secure his choice, and to guide his conduct; but as that is rarely or ever the case, and even when it is, how many little incidents may arise to prevent the consummation of his wishes?—So that an uniform disposition does not secure the certainty of a man's conduct. It is certain he will act, and as nearly as he can to the gratification of himself; but it is not certain in what peculiar manner, because, circumstances may turn up to prevent him, from doing that, to which his inclination prompted him.

WHENCE, then, must we derive *absolute moral certainty*, if we can neither derive it from *the influence of external objects*, nor from the dispositions of Mankind? I can only perceive one other source, from whence it can be derived, and hither our opponents are driven, when closely attacked by solid argument, viz. The decrees of GOD, and the orders of Providence. They say, GOD has decreed all actions and events, and the executive hand of Providence, secures the performance of what he has decreed. Could this be granted; which it certainly may in all things, wherein morality is out of the question; what then would follow? It would then be evident, that *moral Necessity* is founded in, and originates from *the nature and connection of things*, from *Physical causes*, or *natural Necessity*.

THUS

THUS, to speak the language of their sentiments, a man is ordained to be the author of some mischief: and to secure the event, the Divine Being gives him a particular disposition of mind; he then places him in such a situation, that he shall infallibly meet with those external objects of temptation, calculated to induce him to commit the horrid deed, at the very time, and in the very situation, that is the most suitable to his inclinations; every obstruction shall be taken out of the way, and he shall have no ability to practice self-denial, on the occasion; and so, *necessarily accomplishes* the divine pleasure. Yet, because he is willing to do that which has been appointed for him, he must needs be a *Moral Agent*, at all events; and the *Necessity* he is under, must be *moral Necessity*! Though it be clearly evident, all things considered, that he has neither ability nor means to act otherwise; and therefore is, to all intents and purposes, in a state of *physical*, or *natural Necessity*; not having an ability *to will* to act in a different manner. For if he had this ability, he might perhaps will to act otherwise, which would at once destroy the doctrine of *absolute Necessity*. If he has not *ability to will to act otherwise*, owing to the agency of some superior controlling power, or external influence which he cannot resist, then he is maimed, and in a state of *Physical Necessity*; † and can no longer be considered as a

Moral

† In this conclusion I have the countenance of Dr. PRIESTLY, who says, "When it is considered, that the distinction between things NATURAL and MORAL entirely ceases on the scheme of Necessity." Phil. Necess. p. 127.

Moral Agent: and, therefore, this argument must fail, both on this account, and because it is impossible that the Divine Being should absolutely decree, and by his Providence, purposely secure, the performance of sinful actions and events. Yet he must have secured them, or else they could not have been *absolutely necessary*. Therefore I conclude that mankind are not in a *state of absolute moral Necessity*, in the sense of our opponents.

If, indeed, it could be admitted, that mankind are like so many wheels connected together in the great machine of the universe, and utterly incapable of moving, or of remaining in a state of rest, separately, being firmly locked together, and depending on the master wheel, and on the motions of all the rest; then it might be affirmed, that they are in a state of *absolute Necessity*; and in that case, all their movements would be certain and necessary; but that is not the state of mankind: for every man is himself a distinct agent, and not a part of a machine, and can move and act, without being acted upon by another, from a principle of action in himself; as we have already shewn, in its proper place.

THAT mankind, since the fall, are inclined to do that which is sinful, or have a strong propensity to *Moral Evil*, is evident, from observation, experience and the word of GOD. But the question in dispute is this, are men
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under a *Moral Necessity* of doing every particular sinful action, which they commit while passing through life, and to commit them in such particular moments? For, *Moral Necessity* is carried to this length by our opponents: and nothing short of this amounts to *infallible certainty*. I have been acquainted with some persons, who, after having addicted themselves to drunkenness for many years, have laid aside the use of intoxicating liquors; and after living a sober life for several years more, have betaken themselves to the same habits again. In such instances, where is *that Moral Necessity*, that amounts to certainty?—Cannot the common blasphemer refrain from swearing? Take him into the presence of a magistrate, and make the experiment. Cannot a covetous Miser do a generous action, on some particular occasion, though he should repent of it as soon as he has done it? Cannot a man forego the gratification of a sordid appetite? May he not do it from a rational conviction, that to forbear will be to his advantage? I own, there is a great difficulty in these cases, and therefore we say, that a vicious man is under a *Moral Necessity of acting wickedly*, i. e. it is very difficult for him to avoid doing so. But, should a profane person consider the impropriety of his conduct, might he not reform his manner of conversation? Living evidences of this frequently occur. And then, where is *that Moral Necessity which amounts to absolute certainty*. So long as a man is rational, may he not reflect

on his own behaviour? I do not say, that a wicked man can do that which is *positively good*: but surely, he may refrain from much *positive evil*. And if he may, where is that *Moral Necessity* which amounts to *absolute certainty*.

FROM every view of the subject, I am more and more convinced that *the Moral Necessity* pleaded for, is nothing more than *natural Necessity*. And they who account for the fall of man, on *the principle of Necessity*, can have no other *Necessity* in view, but *natural Necessity*: for *Moral Necessity* was directly opposed to the introduction of sin. Therefore it must be *natural Necessity*, which they have pleaded for, under the title of *Moral Necessity*; so called probably, lest their scheme should be charged with making GOD the author of sin.

SOME have defined *Moral Necessity* to be, a *Necessity* to act according to choice. No one will attempt to deny this: for it may be admitted on both sides the question. If we suppose it to be *necessary*, that a man should act according to the present disposition of his will; yet, how does this affect the argument? When it is manifest, that the act of willing or choosing, is only an effect proceeding from some cause. That cause is either *in ourselves*, or *in some other*. We have already proved, that it is in ourselves. If it be in ourselves, it must either be a *voluntary*, or *necessary cause*. If it be *necessary*, it must arise either from *our own nature*, or from
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the will of some other Agent. If it originate in the will of some other Agent, then it *must* be *natural* and not *Moral Necessity*: for choice is quite out of the question, when the *cause* of it is in the will of a *foreign Agent*. And in that case, *moral agency* is entirely destroyed. If it proceed from ourselves, i. e. from our own particular make, disposition, habit, intelligence, or interest; then, as we are mutable creatures, and ever changing our opinions, and constantly varying in our inclinations and habits, there can be no permanency in our actions, and therefore no *absolute certainty* of them in the view of any, but that of infinite intelligence, which sees all things in the most perfect and comprehensive manner, calling things which are not, as though they were. And yet his perfect unerring perception, does by no means alter the nature of our actions. If the nature of our actions would have been free, mutable, and uncertain, without the Foreknowledge of GOD, they must have been so with it: because it has no influence on them; it is not a cause of action, much less of the certainty thereof. I do not deny that all things are certain in GOD's view; for if they were otherwise, how could he perceive them? But as this has no influence on our actions, our actions are nevertheless free, mutable, and contingent in their nature, being our own; and for which we are responsible as *Moral Agents*. Could it be proved, that the Foreknowledge of GOD had an influence on the conduct of rational Agents, and the nature of their

actions; then we should be obliged to conclude, either that he did not foresee future sinful events, or else that his creatures were under the necessity of sinning against him; neither of which can be admitted. The Divine Being, is a GOD of such infinite intelligence, that were he to give his creatures all the liberty and freedom imaginable, of acting for themselves, this would not preclude his foreseeing all their future ways, with unerring precision, and with the minutest exactness. But were we to suppose, that his Prescience had a necessary influence on the sinful actions of men, then it would be impossible for the Divine Being to foreknow them; because it would involve in it the act of giving existence to *moral evil*; and so make GOD the author of sin. But we have already, fully cleared up this point, in its proper place. Creatures are not under a necessity of committing such particular acts of sin, from any foreign agency; for if they were, their conduct would not be criminal, and, therefore, they could not sin under such circumstances; consequently they cannot be in a state of *Necessity* to violate the law of GOD, from a foreign agency. If therefore, they are in a state of *Necessity*, that *Necessity* must entirely originate in themselves, which, in my apprehension, is that kind of *Necessity*, strictly called *moral*: a *Necessity*, arising from disposition and habit, and not from the necessary influence and agency of foreign or external objects: since we have already proved, that external objects

have

have not that influence upon the will, which some have attributed to them.

IF *Moral Necessity* proceed from our inclinations, dispositions, &c. Then, as mutable creatures, there can be no great stability in our choice; as may be seen in Adam's defection; for such was his nature, and such his motives to have continued obedient, that it was morally certain he would have stood, in the moment of temptation: yet, it proved otherwise: for he fell, when there appeared to be every thing on the side of his standing that could be found in a *Moral Agent*. The consequence is clearly this, that the introduction of moral evil, could not be the effect of *Moral Necessity*, as it is called; or if it could, *that Necessity* must have had its origin in *natural Necessity*, as it's proper cause. How strange is it, then, that men in the heat of disputation, should lay so great a stress on *Moral Necessity*; as if it secured the end as firmly, as *natural Necessity*: whereas, it only secures this, that a rational being will act according to his choice, be that ever so absurd. Yet, while choice is governed by reason or inclination, &c. the certainty of events, is much easier proved from that which is the cause of choice, then from the act of choosing; the cause, reason, or inclination, &c. existing in, and depending on an inconstant Agent, left to determine his own actions, must be a mutable cause: and there is nothing more certain than this, that the conduct

duct of such a Being will be changeable: the cause being so, from whence his conduct proceeds. And to prove it certain and fixed, we must have recourse to *some foreign immutable agency*. But if we do this, we destroy the idea of *Moral Agency*, and *responsibility*: for how is it possible to reconcile the ideas of *Moral Agency* and *responsibility*, with that of a state of *absolute Necessity*? These two ideas are as opposite in their nature, as meridian light and midnight darkness; and cannot exist in one and the same subject, and in relation to the same actions.

Mr. EDWARDS says, "Moral Necessity is a certainty
 " of the inclination and will itself; which does not admit
 " of the supposition of a will to oppose and resist it. For
 " it is absurd, to suppose the same individual will to op-
 " pose itself, in it's present act; or present choice to be
 " opposite to and resisting present choice: as absurd as it
 " is to talk of two contrary motions, in the same moving
 " body, at the same time. And therefore the case sup-
 " posed never admits of a trial, whether an opposing re-
 " sisting will can overcome this necessity." (see page 33.)
 He supposes the will to be determined by the strongest
 motive.—That the previous Bias and inclination may
 be so strong, or the motive presented so powerful, that
 the act of the will may be certainly and indissolubly con-
 nected therewith: and in that case the difficulty of willing
 otherwise would be insurmountable. He says, "When
 " motives

“ motives or previous bias are very strong, all will allow
“ that there is some difficulty in going against them.
“ And if they were yet stronger, the difficulty would be
“ still greater : and therefore if more were added to their
“ strength, to a certain degree, it would render it impossi-
“ ble to surmount.” page 30. In this mode of reasoning
Mr. EDWARDS admits of various degrees of strength in the
motive, or previous bias : and this motive and bias is
something from without, in the direction of which we
have no hand : for if we have, our *mutability* would *destroy*
certainty : therefore, the certainty of our actions depends
upon a *foreign agency*, and the degree of strength in *that*
Agency. But how does this latter argument accord with
the former ; where he says, “ Moral Necessity is a certain-
“ ty of the inclination and will itself, which does not ad-
“ mit of the supposition of a will to oppose, &c.” But on
what does this certainty depend ? And what is the cause
of it ? For if the effect be certain, the cause must be so.
But if the cause depend on a *mutable Being*, in any mea-
sure, it cannot be certain. It must therefore depend up-
on GOD himself, for all other Beings are *mutable*, and
no other Being can secure the certainty of a man’s being
willing to commit such particular acts of sin, but GOD.
We have already proved, that the cause of sinful actions is
not in GOD, but in the creature ; that his willing to do that
which is sinful, does not depend upon external motives :
and then, how comes it to pass, that *moral certainty*, is a
certainty

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certainty of the will itself; except we introduce an infallible immutable agency; which cannot be admitted. Thus far, however, we may allow, that an active Moral Agent, when disposed to action, must will to do this or that: it is certain, that if he wills, he must will something or other; and if this may be called a certainty of the will itself, we readily coincide with his idea. But what service will this certainty be of, to his scheme of Moral Necessity? That he may prove the certainty of the Will, he says, "For it is absurd, for the same individual Will to oppose itself, in it's present act, &c. as absurd as to talk of two contrary motions in the same moving body, at the same time." There is no Necessity for supposing two Wills, in the same mind, at the same time: because one is sufficient to every purpose. Or that the Will should oppose itself. But, it is evident, to every man of common sense, that there are different powers in the human mind, and, that these are not always in perfect harmony; but, in some instances, directly opposed to each other: and there is then a contest between them, when we come to make choice of certain objects and enjoyments; reason and conscience dictate one thing, and inclination and affection quite the reverse. Here are two contrary motions, in the same active Agent, at the same time, which may hold the mind in a state of suspense for a season: but the mind can determine whensoever it pleases, and which way it thinks fit: for it is not a machine

machine to be wrought upon by some foreign power; but, reasons, reflects and determines for itself. Not like a balance preponderating by the heaviest motive; for it is often seen, that the lightest prevails as much as the heaviest; and the weight of every motive is determined by the mind, and not by any intrinsic worth, importance, or excellence in itself. The same mind will esteem that light and trifling at one time, which it esteems important at another; this is probably owing to it's different views of the same object; or to it's mutability. Where then is the certainty of the inclination and will itself? Or on what is that certainty founded? And on what does it depend? If it depend on man, man is mutable; what pleaseth him to day may disgust him to-morrow. And who shall ensure that the object shall please him to day, or at that moment when it is necessary, according to our opponents, that he should act his particular part in the universal Drama? External motives cannot; for their importance with him entirely depends on his capricious humour.

BUT suppose we were to admit, that external motives had an absolute power, to turn the mind of man, and influence his Will, as our apponents represent it; would this relieve their scheme? By no means; for those motives must be presented *with absolute certainty, to secure the certainty* of his actions. And who can do this, but GOD? Which brings it, at once, to the same point as

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before: viz. That the certainty pleaded for, must originate in the Deity. But this involves a contradiction, and is impossible in the nature of things. Besides, the presentment of those motives, with a view to make a man commit sin, would be tempting him to evil. Which the inspired Apostle denies, by saying, "Let no man say
"when he is tempted, I am tempted of GOD: for GOD
"cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any
"man." (Jam. 1. 13.)—And further, if the Divine Being secure the actions of men by his agency, either through the presentment of motives, or any other way, they would then be in a state of *absolute natural Necessity* to do evil: nor could they avoid it. They could not *will* to avoid it: for the motives having an absolute ascendancy over their Will, they could not will to do otherwise. If a man *cannot will* to do otherwise, owing to a foreign agency, he is not only under *Moral Necessity*; but that *Moral Necessity* derives its *certainty* from *natural Necessity*: and this is the necessity Mr. EDWARDS pleads for, in his Treatise on the Will: for according to his mode of reasoning a man's not being able to will otherwise, is not so much owing to his own natural dispositions, as to the directing foreign agency, which he is under, by a *Necessity of Nature*.

Mr. EWARDS affirms that the *Moral Cause* is as perfectly connected with its moral effect, as the *Natural Cause* is
with

with it's natural effect : and, that Moral Necessity is as absolute as Natural Necessity. If this be true, Moral Necessity must depend upon GOD, and not upon man; for if it depend on a mutable Being, it cannot be so certain, as those events which are the effects of *natural causes*; events which are secured by an immutable agency, and owe their existence to the infinite wisdom, and unalterable counsel of the Deity. But, if *Moral Necessity* do not depend on man's self, he is no longer a *Moral Agent*: therefore *Moral Necessity* is rightly defined to be something highly probable, but not absolutely certain. For, it is impossible in the nature of things, that *Moral Necessity* should be *as certain* as *Natural Necessity*; because, it depends on the will of a mutable Agent.

IF any intelligent creature had been present when the Serpent entered the garden of Eden, and had known his whole scheme of artful deception; having also been present when the Deity made a covenant with Adam; and had reflected on the probability of his standing or falling, from a view of his nature, which was pure, the covenant made, the threatenings and promises, the idea of changing a certainty for an uncertainty, &c. Would not such a creature have concluded, that the moral certainty was on the side of his standing? And, that the motives for standing were ten times more powerful, than those proposed, as the means of his seduction? Nature itself was

against his transgressing the Divine Law; and every circumstance seemed combined together, to guard him against the awful event. Yet Satan prevailed upon Eve, and she persuaded Adam, against *moral probability*. To what then, can this event be attributed, but to that which we have already ascribed it? a *finite capacity*, *peccability*, *mutability*, and *emulation*. For, if we impute it to *moral causes*, those causes do not appear adequate, to produce the effect, all things considered. We must conclude, that mankind had a power to resist; otherwise eating of the forbidden fruit could not be deemed their crime, but their misfortune; and the crime would have devolved upon that agency, which necessitated them to eat the forbidden fruit. Upon Mr. EDWARDS' mode of reasoning, it must be admitted, that the temptation was a more powerful motive, than natural purity, rectitude, habits of obedience, the promised good, or than the threatened evil of that law, which they were under. Had it been really so, it must have been so, either in itself, intrinsically, or it must have derived it's power from something else, which gave it efficacy. Let us then examine it's intrinsic power, abstracted from every other consideration. On one side, there was purity of nature, love to GOD, a disposition to do his will, a promise of life on condition of obedience; and the threatenings of death in case of disobedience; and superadded to these, a knowledge of the truth, faithfulness and goodness of the Deity. On the other side, an im-

peachment

peachment of the divine moral character, and his truth, an idea of the continuance of life in the way of disobedience, a state of independance, (for so I understand the words, ye shall be as GOD's, *Elohim*, vested with divine powers, or if I may be allowed the expression, *Mighties*,) and an increase of knowledge, *your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall know good and evil*: and all this upon the bare *ipse dixit* of the Serpent, in direct contradiction to the Deity. If reason, or common sense, had been consulted, or called in to judge, whose word was fittest to be credited, the word of him who had created them, blessed them, dignified them with honour, and dominion, and made them compleatly happy: or the word of a stranger, whom they had never seen before; for so a speaking Serpent must have been, if they had but indulged a moments reflection? Would reason have hesitated a moment, in judging, who was fittest to be believed, the Creator or a creature? Or if the evidence was too obscure, would reason have changed a certainty for an uncertainty? and changed at the certain consequence, of incurring the displeasure of the Deity! Who, having power to create, must also have power to destroy! Also, the improbability of the fruit of a tree doing that for them, which the Serpent affirmed. Put all these together, and let any man of common sense determine, whether of these motives, reason, and reflection, would have deemed the strongest, or most powerful. It also deserves our notice, that there was then, no wrong

inclination in man, which might have given a bias to the Will.

HAVING made this appeal to reason and common sense, here I leave it: secure in my own apprehension, that the vote will be on my side, while I affirm, that the power which gave efficacy to the temptation, was not in the external motive, but in something else. Yet the temptation succeeded! There must, therefore, have been something else, which gave it a superiority over the mind of Eve, or else she would not have sinned.—Can we suppose that the Serpent possessed influence and agency, sufficient to change the nature of Eve; or to induce her to do that which was contrary to her own judgment? This I should think, no one will affirm, in the sober exercise of reason. But should this be admitted, the conduct of Eve would have been the effect of *Natural*, and not of *Moral Necessity*. Will any venture to affirm, that GOD gave virtue and efficacy to the temptation, by his decree, his agency, or his influence? Every mind, unprejudiced, must recoil from such an idea with indignation! But were we to admit of this absurdity, it would then follow, that Eve's conduct must have been the effect of a *Natural* and not of a *Moral Cause*: according to Mr. EDWARDS' own definition of *Natural* and *Moral Causes*.—I would ask again, on *what power* did the certainty of her actions depend? For it must be *certain* at all events, with those men,

men, whom nothing but certainty will satisfy! Yet, who does not perceive, that *the certainty* of Eve's conduct, depended on her deception; and *that* on her own credulity; her not calling in the aid of her own reason; nor consulting her husband; nor asking direction of the Deity: but hastily and rashly swallowing the bait, suited to her emulation, without taking time carefully to deliberate, or weigh the matter over. Do any ask for the reason of this rashness? Or is there any necessity for such a question? If she had ability to act otherwise, and did not exercise those powers with which she had been endued; and which if exercised, would have enabled her to have escaped the snare; and, if these powers were not under restraint, from a foreign agency, (as consistent with our ideas of moral agency, they could not;) how could her conduct be *absolutely necessary*? Did she not act freely, and without compulsion?—Should any assert, that Eve's remiss conduct was owing to a *foreign agency*, and that she could not will to act otherwise: then, the *cause* must have been a *Natural* and not a *Moral Cause*. For, if some secret agency, besides the temptation, and her own natural inclination, operated on her will, and bound her to a compliance, the success of the Serpents attempt, depended not on a *Moral* but a *Natural Cause*. And if her conduct was the effect of a *secret agency*, which she could not withstand; then she could not do otherwise, and was not in the circumstances of a *Moral Agent*: and the effect did not entirely depend

on a *Moral Cause*. Where the effect wholly depends on a *Moral Cause*, it is *uncertain in itself*; or at least, it is not of *equal certainty*, with the effect of a *Natural Cause*. Therefore, in the nature of things, *absolute Moral Necessity* cannot exist, among *mutable intelligences*, but by the *influence of an immutable agency*. Yet, an *immutable agency* could not have been the cause of sin's introduction: for that would criminate the Deity, and exculpate the sinner.

THOUGH *Moral Necessity*, should only be understood of an *high degree of probability*: yet, even then, I think it will be a difficult task, to prove, that man's defection was owing to *Moral Necessity*; for, *probability* was on the other side. It is therefore strange, to me, that any intelligent mind, should conceive, that the introduction of sin, was the effect of *absolute Moral Necessity*. What, because an event has taken place in time; and because the infinite intelligence of the Deity foresaw that event, before time commenced; must it therefore follow, that rational agents are under an *absolute Necessity* of committing sinful actions, and that events are *necessary* before they have taken place?—This borders so much on the doctrine of FATE, maintained by heathen Philosophers; and is so inconsistent with every just idea of *Moral Government*; that I am utterly at a loss to reconcile it, with the moral perfections of the Deity, and with those blessed instructions, and that glorious dispensation of grace and mercy, revealed to us in the sacred Oracles of truth,

UPON

UPON the whole then, it appears a self evident proposition, founded in the reason and nature of things, that mankind were originally, neither under a *Natural* nor a *Moral Necessity* to transgress the Divine Law; but had *full power* in themselves to have retained their innocence: and on this ground alone are we able to prove the culpability of our first Parents, and the justness of their punishment.

SINCE the introduction of sin, the circumstances of mankind are materially different: yet even now, they cannot be deemed in a state of *absolute Necessity*: the *Necessity* of walking just in such a particular track, and no other, for the reasons we have already assigned. They are not under the absolute dominion of external objects:—They are not impelled by a divine agency:—They are not under the influence of any foreign compulsory power whatsoever:—They are mutable in every point of view; not only liable to be changed; but liable to change of themselves:—They are self-mooving, self-acting beings:—and, a state of *absolute Necessity* cannot comport with our ideas of *Moral Agency*; for wherever the former exists, the latter must be excluded: because, we cannot conceive it possible, that a being should be both in chains, and in a state of liberty, at the same time, and in reference to the same actions.

To suppose, therefore, a rational creature *under the absolute governing Agency of a foreign power*, and at the same
time

time to declare him *an accountable Moral Agent*, is, surely, one of the greatest absurdities that could ever have entered into the mind of man: for it is an *absolute contradiction*, in the nature and fitness of things; and as such, it can have no foundation in truth. One of these two ideas, must be given up: and we must either conclude, that mankind are not in a *state of absolute Necessity*; or else that they are *not Moral Agents*. Mankind, are *Moral Agents*; and therefore they cannot be in in a *state of absolute Necessity*.

THERE is no such thing as *absolute Moral Necessity* to be found in *mutable Moral Agents*, nor is it possible that it should, in the reason and nature of things: it is an idea, most glaringly absurd, and involves in it a palpable contradiction. It either denies their *Moral Agency*, or else their mutability. If *absolute Moral Necessity* be attributed to the agency of a foreign power, which necessarily actuates the will of *the Moral Agent*, then it denies *Moral Agency*: for that being can never be deemed a *Moral Agent*, whose actions are directed by the will of another. And if it be ascribed to the nature, constitution, and habits of *the Moral Agent*, then it denies his *mutability*: for if the *free actions* of a *Moral Agent* be *absolutely necessary*, that *Agent* must be *immutable*: for, otherwise, he would be liable to vary his conduct. Thus, it will appear I trust, to the candid unprejudiced reader, from every point of view, that the doctrines of *absolute Moral Necessity*, and *Philosophical Necessity*, (which are very nearly allied,) have no foundation in truth.

S E C T. VI.

*On Contingency, as it stands opposed to Necessity.
Or an Enquiry whether any actions or
Events are Contingent.*

CONTINGENCY stands opposed to ABSOLUTE
NECESSITY. Actions and events are said to be
contingent, when they may, or may not come to pass.
Those actions and events may also be deemed *contingent*,
which depend on *the free will of a mutable Agent*, and not on
the directing agency of a foreign power: while those actions
may be considered as *necessary*, which are directed by
an *irresistable immutable foreign Influence*: and in this sense
we use the words *Contingency* and *Necessity* in this section.

THE object of inquiry is, whether any action, or
event, be *contingent* in itself? Whether there be an action,
or

or event, that does not depend on some *fixed prior cause*? This question may be resolved, by having recourse to known and established principles, which cannot be receded from, without manifest absurdity. As 1. Sinful actions and events cannot have an *immutable cause*; for there is no *immutable cause*, but God, and those causes which are immediately dependant on himself. Sin cannot owe its origin to God, but is an effect produced by creatures; therefore the *cause* of sinful actions and events, must be a *mutable one*, and the actions dependant on *mutable causes* must be *so* too, in the nature of things; and if this be the case, then, *contingent*. 2. *Moral Agents*, can begin, continue, and perform an action, of, and from themselves, without any external cause, exciting them to it. i. e. If they be suffered. They are generally left to the freedom of their own will, and to act for themselves. And they are *changeable Agents*: consequently their actions, and those events dependent thereon, must also be of the mutable kind, and so *contingent*. We add, 3. Many of those *free Agents*, are perfect humourists in nature; and consequently the most caparicious in their dispositions. Reader, let us figure to ourselves, a *Moral Agent* of this complexion, left to act according to the freedom of his own will, without the impulsive agency of a foreign power; and then let us judge, whether his actions will be *contingent*, or *necessary*.

FROM the foregoing general established propositions, it
may

may be understood, what is meant by contingent actions and events.—They are actions performed by a *Moral Agent*, left to the freedom of his own will, without the interposition of a compulsive foreign power, impelling him to action.

SOME authors have supposed, that a *contingent* action or event implies a contradiction; that it sets aside Divine Prescience; and is an idea that subverts *providential government*. And if this could be made to appear, reason would say, it is an idea, which ought to be abandoned. But we have before shewn, that *moral free agency* has no such tendency; and as that is the ground of *Contingency*, *Contingency* itself can have no such tendency: for a *contingent* action, or event, is only a proper effect of *free agency*: if *free agency* be admitted, the actions of *mutable free Agents* must be contingent, according to our notion of the word, as it is opposed to the doctrine of *Necessity*. Nor does this idea imply a contradiction: for it perfectly corresponds with the nature and fitness of things. If a *Moral Agent*, be accountable to another, for his conduct, it is fit, that he should direct his own actions; and not that they should be directed by the irresistible agency of a foreign power. Yet, there is, perhaps, no proposition more self-evident than this, that the actions performed, by such a *free Agent* are *contingent*, in our sense of the word; the *Agent* being *mutable*. If sinful acts are not in some sort
contingent.

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contingent,

contingent, then, they do not depend upon a changeable Being; but upon an unchangeable one; in fine, they must depend upon GOD. If the certainty of sinful events depend upon GOD, he must either be *the first active cause* of those events; or else he must be the orderer and director of those events. GOD cannot possibly be *the cause* of those events, as we have fully proved from the nature of things. And if he be the orderer and director of them, he must direct them by means. For instance, we may suppose, that sinners have a nature that disposes them to commit sins of various kinds. Are we then to consider GOD as ordering their conduct, by restraining, and bounding their actions within certain limits, which they shall not pass? This may be admitted as a fact: for it is reasonable to conclude, that the providence of God is concerned, in restraining the conduct of all his sinful creatures, But the question still returns, will this restraining providence uniformly exercised for the good of his creatures, secure the sinners keeping to the utmost bounds of limitation prescribed to him, on all occasions, and that without any intermission? The sinner cannot go beyond the limits: but may he, in no one instance, fall short; as he is left to act from himself?—And being mutable, and possessed of reason and conscience, and favoured with various means of information, concerning the consequences of his wicked practices, may he not, in some instances, deny himself, and exert his natural powers in obeying the will of God?

AGAIN

AGAIN, if it could be fairly proved, that his disposition to transgress the law, would insure his going to the uttermost limits prescribed: yet this will not apply to the origin of moral evil; and if the first act of sin was not made certain by some *immutable agency*, as every following sinful action, and event, depended on that action, they must have been *contingent* as depending on a *contingent* or *mutable cause*. Reasoning after the manner of our opponents, we may say, the present sinful act depends on some prior cause; to prove that it is *not contingent*, in some sort, we must prove that prior cause, not to be *contingent*: and not only *the immediate* prior cause, but *every remote* cause, up to the first link in the great chain, of prior causes and effects: for if the first be *contingent*, every subsequent act of sin must be so. If the *first cause* of sinful acts were not *contingent*, but *necessary*; then, the first sinful act was the effect of *some certain immutable cause*. But what *certain immutable cause* can there be found for sin, when we have clearly proved, that *the cause* of sin is not in GOD, but in the creature? The creature being *changeable* in it's nature, and left to the freedom of it's own will, is but ill calculated to act with certainty: and as sin originated in a mutable creature, how then is it possible that it should have an *immutable, certain, or necessary first cause*? If sin have not an *immutable first cause*, no act of sin can be a *certain and necessary act*, all things considered; even, though we should allow that the Divine Being orders, and disposes

disposes all sinful events, by his alwise and gracious providence, by which, he restrains the sinner, and over-rules his actions to subserve the purposes of his own good pleasure. If, therefore, there be any truth in our first proposition, that GOD is not *the first cause* of moral evil; then it is abundantly evident, that all sinful events must, in some measure, be contingent, as they depend on the will of a *mutable Being*.

THERE is yet one difficulty in our way, objected to us by our opponents. How does the Divine Being fore-know those events which are contingent? This difficulty we will endeavour to solve under it's proper head, and will give all the proof that can be reasonably expected for the establishment of a proposition of that kind. Infinite intelligence cannot be ignorant of any event; for that intelligence which does not know every thing is not infinite; the Deity is possessed of infinite intelligence and therefore must know every thing. And his knowledge of events, makes no difference in the nature of those events. If they are contingent in their nature, his fore-knowledge of them does not make them to be otherwise. To say that GOD cannot fore-know a contingent event, is to affirm, either, that there is no such event, or else, that there are some actions which he does not fore-know.

INFINITE infallible knowledge, must comprehend all possibilities;—ALL contingences are possibilities.

THEREFORE,

—THEREFORE, infinite infallible Knowledge, must comprehend all Contingences.

“THE same effect or event, which is in part the
 “ foundation of uncertainty, with respect to finite or im-
 “ perfect knowledge, may be the distinct or proper object
 “ of knowledge, in itself, infallible and infinite. Now, if
 “ we grant that there is any knowledge in itself infallible,
 “ we cannot imagine that any thing possible (as every
 “ contingent, though considered as future is possible)
 “ should be uncertain unto such knowledge:”—
 Dr. JACKSONS, Tom. 11, Page 49.

THERE can be nothing concealed or hid from a GOD of infinite intelligence: we must not, then, deny his fore-knowledge of sinful events. And, if we deny *contingency*, we take away *moral agency*, and *that liberty*, which is essential to the performance of actions of *the moral kind*; therefore we cannot deny *Contingency*. Both these propositions must be true, in the nature of things: and yet we may never be able to explain how the Divine Being fore-knows *sinful* or *contingent events*. But is this a matter that stumbles us! In the Deity there are many such things. We say, GOD is a spirit; and that spirit bears no relation to matter: by consequence, a spirit can have no discernment of material objects; yet GOD has made a world of material existances; and has admirably adapted one thing to

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another

another, providing as suitably for the gratification of the corporeal senses, as if he himself possessed the same organs: let them that stumble at the idea of GOD's fore-knowledge of *contingent events*, explain this matter to us in a satisfactory manner. Or let them account for the existence of the Deity as a Spirit. And if they cannot do these things, why will they pretend to account for GOD's fore-knowledge of future events, events which do not originate in himself. The existence of GOD must be ever incomprehensible; and therefore the incomprehensibility of a thing can be no objection to the truth of it. Some effects have been known long before their causes were investigated, or discovered: and there are others, the causes of which yet remain to be discovered.

SOME may be ready to ask, whether any action or event is uncertain in GOD's view of things? If every thing be certain in his view, must they not be certain in themselves? And if they be certain in themselves, how then can they be *contingent*? That the Deity foresaw all the future transactions of time, in the same perfect manner, that he sees the present, or the past, must be acknowledged; otherwise, his intelligence would not be infinite, but his intelligence is infinite; and therefore he must have fore seen all the transactions of time, in the same manner and order, in which they come to pass; which is abundantly manifested in the prophecies of the old Testament, where

where, even the minutest circumstances are foretold, far beyond what the most intelligent and faithful historian should be able to relate; entering deeply into all the latent springs of action, in the minds of men, and in the Courts and Counsels of Princes. But GOD's perfect fore-knowledge did not alter *the nature* of those actions, or *the motives* from whence they proceeded. It did not change *the free actions of the Moral Agent*, into *the actions of a machine*, impelled by force, and influenced by the absolutely irresistible agency of a foreign power. They still remain to be *contingent*, or *the actions of a Moral Agent* left to *the freedom* of his own will, without the certain directing influence of a foreign power. Therefore, GOD's certain fore-knowledge of future sinful actions alters not the state of the question; nor makes those actions, in the least, the more certain than they would have been, supposing he had not fore-known them. They are still the actions of *mutable Agents* left to the freedom of their own will.

IF any one shall say, after all, they must be *certain*: it is sufficient to answer, they are the actions of *mutable free Agents*, who are self-determined. And if it be certain that a mutable self-determining Agent will perform such actions, at such precise periods of his existence, of himself, without the directing influence of a foreign power, then you may call his actions *certain*. In GOD's view they are *certain*; and yet they are *contingent* in our sense

of *Contingency*: for they are the actions of a free Agent, in a proper sense; and not an effect of *the irresistible influence of a foreign power*. If, therefore, this may be called *certainty*, it is a very different kind of *certainty*, to that which our opponents plead for, with so much art and zeal.

SINNERS! Let us intreat you not to consider your sins, as necessary and unavoidable; lest your consciences become stupid and your hearts callous and impenitent. Suffer your conscience to speak,—stifle not its voice; but listen to its declarations.—Will *it* tell you, that you are in a state of Necessity, and that you cannot avoid prophaneness, flandering, drunkenness, lewdness, fornication, sabbath-breaking, blaspheming GOD's holy name, and the violation of moral and religious duties, enjoined by the laws of GOD?—Will you be able to plead *this*, before the awful tribunal of Heaven, when summoned to give an account of every deed done in the body, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; and say you could not avoid committing these sins?

When the Spirit of God convinces a Sinner of the wickedness he has committed, and the aggravated nature thereof; do his transgressions appear to have been the effect of Necessity?—Does he not think that he might have acted far otherwise?—Does not his guilt flash in his face? Does he not bitterly regret the past? Convinced,
that

that he has sinned against light and knowledge, and that he had power to have acted a much better part? O! sinners, why will you then, lay the reins upon the neck of your lusts; and follow the devices and desires of your wicked hearts? Why will you reject the mercy of GOD in Christ, and blasphemously say you cannot do otherwise, because it is so decreed; or that a secret agency prevents you, making the Almighty the author of your iniquities: and that your sinful actions are necessarily connected with those circumstances, in which GOD has placed you? —Have not others been created under the same circumstances and yet have conducted themselves in a far different manner; and will you be held guiltless for complying with every temptation that offers itself, and running on in the broad road of everlasting destruction, contrary to the dictates of reason and conscience! Away with all such destructive notions, and turn from the error of your ways; before that awful period arrive, when the shadow of death shall be stretched over you, and that night commence, in which no man can work. How dreadful! to awake from your delusion, in that lake, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!—Where no deliverer is near, but all is horror, darkness, irremediable despair, and every cry for mercy, will be for ever vain.

Does the Divine Being set bounds to the conduct of wicked men, and thereby restrain them from doing all

the mischief that is in their hearts? Pray to him that he would keep you from sinning against him. Beg of him grace, that you may not comply with your evil dispositions: but that you may be able to resist them. Intreat him to fortify you against temptation, and the wiles of the enemy, that you may not be overcome by him.—Be watchful, be prayerful, lest you be drawn into sin by surprise.—Consider your ways, and turn again to the Lord; for there is nothing that binds your souls to vice, but your own lusts: no fatal Necessity but that which ariseth from your own perverse inclinations, and your easy compliance with temptation. Therefore strive against sin; and endeavour in the strength of divine grace to overcome yourselves. “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, upon him; and to our GOD, for he will abundantly pardon,” (Isa, 53. 6. 7.)

P A R T VI.

Some Objections against Moral Agency, from the Decrees of GOD, Divine Prescience, and various Passages in the Writings of the Old and New Testament, considered.

S E C T. I.

Objections to MORAL AGENCY, from the Decrees of GOD considered.

I imagine, that every professor of christianity, who has diligently perused his Bible, and made the word of GOD his rule of faith, must acknowledge, that the Divine Being has decreed some things, at least: for the sacred scriptures clearly discover this truth, to every impartial reader.—We may also presume to suppose, that every man, blessed with a moderate share of common sense, and endued with a capacity to reflect on the nature and fitness

of things, must believe that before the Divine Being created the universe, he, as an infinitely wise Agent, formed some plan of operation respecting the production of the world; its manner and form; the number, magnitude, natures, properties and order of its several parts; the different species of creatures, which should inhabit every distinct globe, clime, or element: the manner in which he meant to govern the whole; how long this mighty fabric should continue in existence; and what events should take place, either as the effect of his own agency, or by the free agency of his rational intelligent creatures. He must have purposed to make all the different species of creatures, with natures suitable to their respective stations, capacities, employments, modes of existence, and manner of life.—And, as the Divine Being is possessed of infinite intelligence, he necessarily foresaw the conduct of his rational creatures, through the whole period of their continuance, in this present state and world; it is therefore reasonable to conceive, that he decreed, or purposed in himself, what line of conduct he meant to pursue, respecting his rational creatures, the punishment of their crimes, the extension of mercy, the exercise of patience, forbearance, &c. &c.

EVERY wise Agent conducts his affairs with deliberation and counsel. He first considers in his own mind, what business he shall transact, or what work he shall perform.

perform. And when he has determined this, he then devises the best mode of executing what he has planned : so that in every movement, there must of necessity be included, the idea of a prior directing purpose, or resolution. For what is it to decree ? Is it not to purpose the doing of some work, or the performance of some service ? And can any thing be done without it ? A man cannot build an house, without first purposing to do it. He cannot employ the means for affecting this purpose, without first resolving to employ those means. He cannot perform any action, which depends on a resolution of the will, without first purposing, or decreeing to perform it. And shall the Divine Being (only,) act without thought, without design, and without counsel ! If he be a wise Agent, he must have laid a compleat plan of all his perfect operations ; and then he must either have resolved to have carried that plan into execution, or to have dropped it. or else, he must have remained in a state of suspense. Every intelligent mind must perceive, that so long as an agent remains in a state of doubt, that it is impossible for him to carry his scheme into execution. If he resolve to drop it, it must come to nothing of course ; and nothing secures the performance, but determining to accomplish it. And from this view of the subject, I persuade myself, that every rational creature will conclude, that the Divine Being, as a wise agent, has decreed some events ; and that whatever he has positively designed, shall
infallible

infallibly come to pass ; which is clearly evinced by the fulfilment of many remarkable Prophecies, foretelling the accomplishment of what he had decreed.

THE object of our enquiry then is, what events has GOD decreed ? Has he predetermined every event ? Or only some ? There can be no hazard in concluding that he has decreed his own conduct, under every possible circumstance. Or in other words, that he has predetermined every event which is produced by his own agency, or brought to pass by the influence of his all-wise providence. If the event be dependent on his sovereign will, I can perceive no reason for supposing that he has not decreed it ; because, he must either will or not will it's existence, if he willed it's existence, he purposed it, for to will, with him, is the same as to decree. And according to our former mode of reasoning, he must either have predetermined that it shall, or shall not exist, as an event dependent on his sovereign will.

THE question then to be discussed is, Is there any event that does not depend on his sovereign will ? Can any event come to pass, GOD not willing it ?—It must be confessed, that the will of GOD has some concern in every event of time ; for no event can happen should GOD determine it to be otherwise ; because he is able to prevent it. And, as he is no unconcerned spectator of
what

what is doing in the moral world, we may reasonably conclude, that all the events of time are the objects of his will: for he has either willed to effect them by his own agency, and then they are sure to be accomplished; or else he has willed to suffer them to be brought about, by the free agency of his intelligent creatures, leaving them to their own option; which events are no less certain, in his view of things than the former, although, his will be not the efficient cause of that certainty, having no influence on their choice; but, as the Divine Being possesses infinite intelligence, and must have fore-known what events his creatures would be disposed to bring about, if left to the freedom of their own will, he is not liable to decree the sufferance of events which will not be effected; and therefore a decree to suffer the accomplishment of those events, renders them certain in his own mind, without the least ground for charging them as an effect of the Divine Agency or influence. Thus creatures are culpable while GOD is clear. It is one thing for GOD to decree the sufferance of sinful events; and it is quite another to decree that his creatures shall be left to act according to the freedom of their own will.—In the former case, GOD foresees that they will be disposed to act such a particular part, and he must either decree to suffer them, or not to suffer them; if he decree not to suffer them, then they are prevented; if otherwise, they effect that which they are suffered to effect; or else his fore-knowledge is fallible.

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In the latter case, creatures though left to the freedom of their own will, may continue to obey; as the angels which fell not; for GOD *would not decree* to suffer them to sin, when he foresaw them obedient; for such a decree would have been nugatory.

WE may further conceive, that the Divine Being might decree to suffer his creatures to proceed in acts of sin to a certain point, and no farther. And that while he decreed *to suffer* them to follow the sinful dispositions of their own hearts, he might also decree to over-rule their sinful actions, to subserve the purposes of his good pleasure, and to glorify the perfections of his nature; for it can hardly be supposed that he would decree *to suffer* them to do that which he could not, eventually, over-rule for his own glory. We then take it for granted, that the Divine Being has decreed all those events, which are brought about by his own agency,—that he has likewise decreed *to suffer* those sinful events, which are produced by the voluntary agency of his rational creatures,—and that he has also decreed that some events shall be brought about by *suffering* wicked agents, to follow the dictates of their own rebellious hearts, though they themselves are totally ignorant of his designs, and have no intention to render him any service.

THAT

THAT which now remains, as an object of consideration, is, to establish the positions laid down, to shew their conformity to moral agency, and illustrate the whole by examples adduced from the sacred scriptures.

I. To establish these positions, it may be sufficient to observe—1. That, for the divine Being *to have decreed* his own conduct, under every given circumstance, perfectly accords with our ideas of an infinitely wise agent: not to do this, must have betrayed, either a want of *fore-sight, resolution, or understanding*, to determine what was most fit and proper to be done; neither of which, can have any existence with God.—2. That, for the divine Being *to have decreed to suffer* his creatures to act for themselves, to transgress his laws, if they chose it, and thereby incur the threatened punishment, perfectly agrees with his own character as a Moral Governor; with the character of his creatures, as *Moral Agents*; and with their state, as *Probationers*. Nor could he have acted otherwise, without destroying these relations, and subverting the proper order and nature of things. And the introduction of sin, fully proves, that he must *have decreed to suffer* it; otherwise it could not have existed, according to our former mode of reasoning. Neither can we, consistently, suppose, that *his decree to suffer* his creatures to sin, was the efficient cause of their transgression; for they had full ability to obey, and acted as free agents; consequently,
their

their sin was not a matter of necessity, but of choice.—

3. For the Deity, to have decreed that some events shall be produced, *by suffering* his rational creatures to follow the dictates of their own wicked inclinations, is abundantly evident, from those passages of holy writ, which declare, that, events accomplished by actions of the worst kind, have been predetermined by the divine Being; such as, the crucifixion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; by the Jews and Pontius Pilate, who, when they had killed the Lord of life and glory, are said to have *done nothing but what his hand and counsel, had before determined to be done.* (Acts 4. 28.) God had decreed his crucifixion, which was to be effected, *by suffering* the perpetrators of this horrid deed to pursue their cruel, and malicious inclinations. * —Hence he may be supposed to have decreed

* Apposite to this are the subsequent remarks of a learned Divine. God
 “ did order or direct the Avarice of Judas, the Malice of the High Priests,
 “ the Popularity of Herod, and Ambition of Pilate for the accomplish-
 “ ing of That, which He had fore-determined concerning Christ, we shall
 “ retain the form of wholesome Doctrine, in thus speaking and thinking, we
 “ think and speak as the Spirit teacheth us. But if any shall say or think
 “ that God did ordain either Judas to be covetous, or the High Priests to
 “ be malicious, or Herod and Pilate to be popular and Ambitious to this
 “ End and purpose, that they might respectively be the Betrayers and Mur-
 “ derers of the Son of God; this is dangerous. The Orthodoxal truth,
 “ and wholesome Form of expressing it, in this and the like Point, is acutely
 “ set down, in that distinction which (for ought I find) was unanimously
 “ embraced by the Ancients, and by all at this Day, that be moderate, ac-
 “ knowledged to be true. Deus ordinavit Lapsus Adami, non ordinavit ut
 “ Adamus laberetur. God did dispose, or order Adam’s Fall (for by his all-
 seeing

decreed the sending of Joseph into Egypt, which was effected, *by suffering* his bretheren to sell him to the Ishmalites; over-rulling this wicked transaction to secure an important good, viz. the preservation of them in a time of general famine.—In like manner, we may conceive, that the Almighty decreed the destruction of nations, *by suffering* the pride, and ambition of the Assyrian Monarch to exert it self to their utter overthrow: for he was, in the words of the inspired prophet; *the rod of God's anger, the staff of his indignation to destroy his enemies, and to remove the bounds of the people.* Yet while he was ardently engaged in fulfilling the righteous indignation of the Deity, he did not once consider himself as an instrument in the hands of Providence, but ascribed all his easy conquests to his own wisdom and courage, boasting himself against that Almighty Being, who had determined the destruction of those very nations, *by suffering* him to follow the bent of his own inclinations; for we cannot suppose, that the divine Agency had any thing

“ seeing Providence, and all-ruling Power, he turned his Fall into his own
“ and our greater good) but He did not decree, ordain or order, that Adam
“ should fall or commit that Transgression by which he fell. For so, he
“ should have been the Author both of Adam's first Sin and of all the Sins
“ which are necessarily derived to us from him. For no Man, (I think) will
“ deny that GOD is the Sole Author of all his own Ordinances and decrees,
“ or of whatsoever he hath fore-decreed or fore-determined us for to do.”

Dr. Jacks. Tom. 2. 597. Fol.

thing to do with his wickedness. There are many other similar examples on sacred record, but these, I imagine, are sufficient to prove the truth of our proposition. And when the divine Being thus decrees to avail himself of the agency of wicked men, he acts perfectly consistent with the rectitude of his own nature, and abundantly discovers his infinite wisdom, without participating in the least degree with the wicked in their wickedness. *To have decreed to suffer* wicked men to act from their own evil dispositions, is perfectly consistent with the holiness and rectitude of the divine nature, as the Moral Governor; and to avail himself of their agency, to perform services that are necessary to be done, but which a good agent neither would nor could perform, is surely a display of consummate wisdom. Where could the Deity have found a good agent, that would have been concerned in crucifying the Lord of Glory? Certainly no where. But shall this important Event, big with the salvation of mankind, fail, for want of agents to accomplish it? By no means. We see the divine Being using the hatred and malice, the violence and perfidy of wicked men, to effect this glorious design: Judas is admitted as an apostle, whose covetousness was sufficiently enormous for the selling of his Lord and Master, and whose unexampled treachery, and audacity, were equal to the part of betraying him into the hands of the chief priests. Annas and Caiaphas are admitted to fill up the pontifical office,
who

who were every way qualified, by their cruel and malicious dispositions, to be the ringleaders in this bloody scene: for he became the object of their inveterate hatred, because, his virtue, piety, doctrine and miracles, tended to bring them into just contempt with the people. Pontius Pilate was made governor of Judea, who was every way well adapted to answer the purposes of the chief priests and the scribes;—To condemn a man without any evidence of his having done amiss, even after washing his hands in their presence, and declaring that he found no fault in him; and that, from no other motives than a desire to obtain the favour of the Jews, and perhaps through fear of their reporting something to his superiors that might prove injurious to his worldly interest. It is obvious, that there could be no necessity for decreeing all the wickedness transacted by the crucifiers of the Prince of Life; it was enough for the Divine Being to predetermine to leave these men to follow the bent of their own sinful hearts, and then subserve his own gracious designs by the treachery of one, the malice of another, and the injustice, cruelty, and pusillanimity of a third, &c. without infusing any evil disposition into any one of them, without exerting his agency, to bind their wills to this business, without positively decreeing that they should perform it; having only to appoint them to their respective offices, and to suffer them to transact the horrid deed, instigated by their own wicked inclinations.—Such was the cruel bent of their

minds, such their eagerness to accomplish their wishes, as entirely superseded the necessity of their being impelled by a Divine Agency. These Examples I think, sufficiently evince that the Divine Being may, and has decreed that some Events shall be brought to pass, by suffering wicked men to follow their own vicious inclinations. As it is expressly said in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. iv. ver. 27.

“ For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus—both Herod
“ and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the People
“ of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever
“ thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”

It is evident that the sufferings and death of Christ were predetermined by the counsel of God. And the decreeing of this event, as a means of redeeming lost sinners, was not only a righteous, but a gracious determination: though the act of crucifying him was the most unexampled act of cruelty that ever disgraced human nature. We cannot suppose, therefore, that the Divine Being decreed the perpetration of this act; but he might decree that the death of the Redeemer should be accomplished by suffering the act to take place, and thereby secure the greatest good to mankind, while he left the perpetrators of it to the freedom of their own will. Here we have the sense of the above cited expressions of the Apostle's fully and clearly preserved, without throwing the least shade upon the character of the Moral Governor. But to conceive, that God positively decreed all the wicked conduct of those who were concerned

concerned in the crucifixion of his only begotten Son, and that they were in a state of absolute necessity, while they imbrued their hands in his innocent blood, is at once to acquit the murderers and criminate the Deity.

SHOULD it be urged from the words of the text, “ they “ did nothing but what his hand and counsel determined “ afore to be done ;” that this is expressive of decreeing the fact ; I answer, it is expressive of the decree of his sufferings and death ; and it is evident that this was decreed, for this end he came into the world : and to this object the words refer, and not to their conduct.—It may further be objected, that if God decreed his crucifixion, which was an end, as a wise agent, he must have decreed the instruments and means. I answer, the Divine Being decreed that this end should be accomplished, by suffering the perpetrators of this horrid deed, to act according to their own wicked dispositions.

BUT should it be further objected, that this is not properly a decree of the means, being only a negative decree, which can effect nothing. If by a decree of the means, a decree of that wicked conduct is meant, which the Jews were guilty of, when they crucified the Lord of Life and Glory ; then I confess that God did not decree it ; for it was impossible that he should decree their wicked conduct, consistently with the perfections of his nature. But, if by a

decree of the means, no more is intended, than a decree of those circumstances which were sufficient to ensure the event; then I think it may easily be proved that God decreed the means, even all the means that was necessary for that purpose: he needed not to decree their wicked conduct; for his infinite intelligence foresaw what they would do, in this business, if suffered to act according to their own free will. Foreseeing, therefore, that they would crucify him, if no circumstance prevented, he could have nothing more to do in the decree of the means, than to determine to leave them to the freedom of their own will, and to remove out of their way every thing that might hinder the accomplishment of their wicked designs. It is in vain to say, but he did not decree their conduct, and therefore he did not decree the means: because, there was no necessity for decreeing it to secure the end, their conduct was foreseen by him, and it only required his sufferance, and the removal of impediments to make it certain. And thus, it appears evident, that the Divine Being has determined, that some events shall be produced, by suffering wicked agents to accomplish their own purposes. He did not decree to suffer any other to do it, therefore no other had opportunity to do it: these had opportunity to do it, because they were suffered; and their malice and hatred were sufficient to urge them on. But does this prove that he decreed their wicked action? Or rather does it not prove that he decreed to suffer it, and thereby over-rule their malice to bring about

about an event, that should be productive of the greatest good? The acting of this wickedness, therefore, depended on themselves, and not on God's positive decree. In crucifying Jesus Christ they acted from themselves; the principle that determined them was in themselves, even enmity and malice. They were free agents; for they acted under no necessity, but that which may be supposed to arise from the evil dispositions of their own hearts; and this kind of necessity does not in the least destroy Moral Agency. Thus having established the Propositions laid down, we will,

II. *SHEW* their conformity to *Moral agency*, and *Moral government*. *Moral agency*, as we have already explained it, depends on a liberty to act freely, without being under the compulsive directing agency of another: and *Moral government* consists in governing by law, and not by agency, in leaving the subjects of it at liberty to act from themselves, and in administering suitable rewards and punishments.

FOR the Divine Being to decree his own conduct under every circumstance, must be perfectly right; because that conduct is righteous. If it be righteous, it can never be the cause of the sinful actions of his creatures, nor of their departure from the path of duty; and, therefore, he can never be supposed to do that which shall destroy their

liberty to obey his laws. Consequently the predetermining of his own actions, under every possible circumstance, does in no wise interfere with the freedom of his rational creatures, or with his *Moral Government* exercised over them.

FOR the *Moral Governor* to suffer his rational creatures to act for themselves, and (if they be so disposed) to sin against him, is so far from destroying the *nature of Moral Agency*, or *Moral Government*, that it fully establishes both. And when the Divine Being foresaw the dispositions of the wicked, and what they would do, if left to the freedom of their own will, it was perfectly right for him to suffer them (under those dispositions) to bring about certain events which his infinite wisdom had seen meet and fit to be accomplished, though they themselves be, nevertheless, criminal, while effecting those purposes. Thus, the Almighty, offended with the conduct of Israel for worshipping idols, determined to punish their Idolatry, by suffering Hazael, king of Syria, to follow the dictates of his cruel disposition, to wage an unrighteous war against them, and to ravage their country, and destroy the inhabitants.—During the period that Israel was governed by judges, the sacred history of those times repeatedly informs us, that when the people sinned against the Lord their God, he being incensed against them, sold them into the hands of their enemies; that is, he permitted
their

their foes to invade and plunder them, which was done with a gracious design, to correct them for their rebellious conduct; which clearly evinces, that the Divine Being may decree the punishment of his people for their sins, by suffering wicked men to oppress them; and at the same time act perfectly consistent with his character as a *Moral Governor*, and without infringing on the liberty of his rational creatures, as *Moral Agents*.

THE decrees of God, according to some, have been considered as of two kinds; those which are effective, and may be called *positive* and *absolute*; and those which do not affect any thing, and may therefore be termed *decrees of sufferance*, or *permission*. I have no great objection to the ideas held out to us under these phrases: for I think it clearly evident that God has decreed some things positively; and that he has decreed the sufferance of others, or in other words, decreed not to hinder them. Yet, if I might be permitted to use my own phrases, I should choose to say, that the decrees of God are all *positive* and *absolute*; and, that they entirely relate to his own conduct: nor can I perceive, that there is any necessity for supposing, that he has decreed the conduct of any of his rational creatures, except in some extraordinary instances, wherein he chooses to interfere for the good of his creatures, and the glory of his great name. To me, there is such an apparent absurdity, in the idea of

God's having predetermined *the conduct of Moral Agents, and probationary Beings, who are governed by laws, and not by agency*, that I confess myself at a loss by what name to call it. But, *the idea of God's having decreed, that such creatures should act directly opposite to the requirements of those laws, by which he governs them now, and will judge of their conduct, and acquit, or condemn them, in the last day of account, is still more ridiculous, being replete with contradiction and injustice: and, in my apprehension, there is no epithet sufficiently severe, or degrading, for so absurd a sentiment.*

IF the Moral Governor had actually decreed all the conduct of his rational creatures, the giving of them laws, with sanctions, promises, and threatnings, would have been entirely useless; for the die must have been already cast: they could not then, have chosen their future course, that being already ordained, and a plan laid down, that should inevitably make them willing to walk in the path appointed for them. But how does this accord with our notions of *Moral Government, and Moral Agency*? Or how is it possible, that either of them should have any existence, if we admit of such an hypothesis?

IT, therefore, seems most consistent with sound reason, to conclude, that the Divine Being has only decreed his own conduct, respecting his creatures, from the beginning

ing to the end of time; namely, as to their formation, their rank in the scale of being, the power with which they should be invested, the mode in which they should be governed, the measure and degree of controul he would exercise over them, with respect to the restraint of Moral evil, or the sufferance of those actions which are repugnant to the precepts of his holy law; the punishment he would inflict on the rebellious, the ends and purposes for which he would over-rule their evil conduct, the measure of mercy he would extend, the patience and forbearance that he would exercise, the benefits that he would bestow, the rewards that he would confer, the good that he would do for them, work in them, and perform by them, and the duration of their existence, in this, or any other state, for which they might be fitted.

GOD's decreeing his own conduct, appears, to me, to be fully sufficient to answer every purpose, necessary to his wisely governing and directing the worlds which he has made, with all their numerous inhabitants of every degree, order, and rank. Indeed, what else can there be wanting? For his infinitely capacious mind necessarily comprehended every possible event both of time and eternity;—And, therefore, he might decree what line of conduct he would pursue, under every circumstance that could arise. To discern the truth of the above observation, we only need to apply it: what has the Divine
Being

Being to do in the government of the inanimate world, but to determine his own conduct respecting it, and the modes and ends of its existence? For the inanimate world is governed by his agency. What has he to do in the government of the brute creation, but to decree what natures and appetites he would bestow on the several species of animals? And what can he have to do in the government of his rational intelligent creatures, that may not fully be comprehended under the idea of decreeing his own conduct respecting them, the powers with which they should be endued, the stations they should occupy, the places of their habitation, the connections and alliances which he would form for them respectively, or suffer them to form for themselves, the laws which he would prescribe for the rule of their conduct, the sufferance of their disobedience, the bounds or limitations within which he would restrain it, and the ends to which he would over-rule it, the punishments he would inflict on the guilty, the rewards he would confer on the obedient, the mercy he would extend, the good which he would work in them, or perform by them, the changes they should undergo, and the gifts he would bestow on them, both in this, and in a future state of existence?

CAN there be any thing further necessary for the government of mankind, than the decreeing of his own conduct

conduct respecting them? And how it could ever enter into the minds of men, to imagine that he has decreed their conduct, which is ever mutable, I am at a loss to conceive; but surely it is a sentiment the most inconsistent with every just idea of *Moral Government*, that we can possibly entertain.

IF the Divine Being had decreed the conduct of mankind, as all his decrees are perfectly consistent, righteous, and holy, we may be assured that their conduct would have been immutably consistent, righteous, and holy; but, as it is in general quite the reverse, we may safely and reasonably conclude, that he has done no more than decreed, to leave them to act according to the freedom of their wills, and to over-rule what they do amiss, to subserve some good purposes; the display of his mercy, or the manifestation of his just indignation against moral evil, which amounts to no more than the decree of his own conduct, which in every point of view is absolutely just and right. For instance, he has righteously decreed to cut off the life of some notorious offender; he could accomplish this without any agency but his own; but perhaps he has ordained that this shall be effected by *suffering* some ruffian to follow the bent of his own inclination. But in so doing he only predetermines his own conduct respecting the ruffian; namely, the suffering of him to act agreeably to his own savage disposition. GOD
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may also decree to suffer the ruffian to assassinate an innocent person, whose life he has determined to take away suddenly; either out of love to him, or in vengeance to some of his connections, for their unkind and ungrateful conduct towards him. In this case, he ordains nothing but what is right in itself, for he has a right to take away the life of any of his creatures, when, and how he pleaseth: and the innocent person may suffer no more in being cut off in this way, than by what is called, a natural death: so that no injury is done to him by the Divine decree. God has not decreed the ruffian's wicked conduct, he has only decreed to *suffer it*, the ruffian is at his own option, and may do as he pleaseth, without any bias on his mind from the Divine Agency, either more immediately, or more remotely.

GOD has also decreed to *suffer* the men of the world to persecute his own people. Witness those horrid persecutions carried on against the Christians under the Roman Emperors, while Pagans, (foretold in the *Apocalypse*.) He did not ordain the act, but only *the sufferance* of it; over-ruling their persecuting conduct, either to correct his own servants, for their undue attachment to the world, or to give evidence of the truth and reality of religion, by their patient sufferings, and martyrdom;—or to shew, that he never utterly deserts them, in any circumstance whatsoever;—or else, to diffuse abroad
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the knowledge of his name, and bring those to be acquainted with the glorious doctrines of the Gospel, who might otherwise have remained in a state of ignorance.

THE Divine Being, having determined to bring a dreadful famine upon the earth, for the preservation of his servant Jacob, and his family, decreed *to suffer* the Patriarch Joseph, Israel's favourite son, to be sold by his brethren into Egypt; he also determined *to suffer* his mistress to lay a temptation before him, and on failing to accomplish her wishes, to accuse him to his master, and thereby procure his imprisonment; and he likewise decreed *to suffer* Pharaoh's servants to transgress and offend their Lord, and to be cast into the same prison where Joseph was confined: all which steps evidently led to his future honours and preferment; and eventually to the relief of his father's house. But in all this, where do we find it necessary to suppose *a positive decree* of any one sinful act? There are *decrees of suffering* sinful actions, but *no* decree of those actions, in a positive sense. Neither was there any necessity for decreeing those actions which are of the sinful kind, for the agents of those actions are all ready to perform them, if the Divine Being withdraw his restraining hand, and *suffer* them to act according to the dispositions of their own hearts lusts.

IN Israel's release from the Egyptian Bondage, there
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are many circumstances that mark the divine interposition in the most pointed manner.—We may reasonably suppose that the event itself was decreed by the Deity, and all the leading circumstances thereof; as first, *the sufferance* of Pharoah's cruel edicts, which God over-ruled to dispose the minds of the people, to leave that fertile country, and to go and take possession of the promised land.—The birth of Moses, his being hid three months, the putting of him in an ark of bulrushes, his being found by Pharoah's daughter, her adoption of him for her son, his being brought up at court, and educated in all the learning of Egypt,—*the sufferance* of his rash act, the killing of the Egyptian; and his banishment in consequence of it.—The raising up of Pharoah to the throne, the enduing of him with surprising constitutional strength, nervous vigour, and firmness of mind superior to others; expressed perhaps in those words. “For this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power.” (Exo. 9. 16.) A weak, or timid prince, would undoubtedly have been a very unsuitable person for this purpose.—*The sufferance* of his stupid infidelity,—And of his earnest desire to keep the Israelites in Bondage; so that, while his nervous system continued firm and unrelaxed, and sufficiently strong to hold it out against the awful judgments of God, nothing could induce him to let the people go.—God might decree to invigorate his nervous frame; which probably may be the meaning of those passages, where God says,

says, "I will harden Pharoah's heart."—(Exo. 4. 21. | 7. 3. 13. | 14. 4.) For we cannot suppose that the Divine Being infused into him, any evil, or stubborn disposition. This he inherited as a sinful depraved man, and so long as the Divine Being supported his constitution in it's full strength and vigour, he would defy omnipotence itself, under every circumstance of accumulated distress; and so invincible was his natural pride and obstinacy, that nothing could dismay him. And if the Divine Being decreed to renew the strength of his nervous system, as often as it should be shaken and impaired by his judgments, that circumstance alone, would have enabled the proud monarch to have hardened his heart repeatedly, till at last it terminated in his total overthrow. And thus, we may account for those seemingly contradicting passages, which sometimes, attribute the hardening of Pharoah's heart, to himself, and at other times to the Divine Being, for both these assertions are true in one and the same instance, admitting of the above supposition, and are thereby made beautifully to harmonize. But God might certainly predetermine to do this, without decreeing his sinful conduct; which was the effect of his own perverse disposition, and not of the divine preordination. His rebellion was not decreed; God decreed *to suffer* it: and we have before shewn, that this decree perfectly corresponds with our ideas of *Moral Government* and *Moral Agency*. God
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did not decree Pharoah's conduct; he only decreed his own, which was a righteous one; for surely he had a right to endow him with a strong constitution of body, and a courageous mind, and to support them in full vigour by his own agency, though he knew that he would make an evil use of these benefits. That which God bestowed on him was a great temporal good, and if he made a wrong use of it, the crime was wholly his own; except it can be proved that he was necessitated to do so, by a foreign agency. And if this could be proved, yet unless that agency was God's, the Divine Being must be clear: it could not be his, because it was an evil agency, producing wickedness, and rebellion. Was he under the agency of the Devil? The word of God is silent concerning this: yet it might be difficult to prove that the Devil had *no hand* in this matter; but if it could be proved that he exercised an absolute uncontrollable agency over him, and that this was the cause of his rebellion, I should think that Satan was the sinner, and Pharoah only an instrument, and therefore not culpable. It is to be supposed, that many more transactions have been charged to the Devil's account than he deserves: and it is not improbable, that laying our crimes to the Devil, first originated in the doctrine of Necessity, and was a scheme invented to relieve conscience. Mankind in the first instance, could not have the audacity to charge their sins directly upon God: and therefore they attributed them
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to the Devil. The practice of charging our sins upon another is very ancient, as ancient as sin itself, as the conduct of our first Parents shews.

I will grant, for the sake of argument, that Satan might propose a temptation to Pharoah, and make use of persuasion, but he could not compel him; for it rested with him, whether he would comply with his solicitations, and if he did, the fault was his own. As a rational Being, could not Pharoah have reasoned with himself thus? “Am I able to contend with the God of the Hebrews, who “by the motion of his servants rod brings to pass events “equal to that of creating? Can I stand against him, who “makes use of the Elements for the weapons of his warfare? Is it to any purpose for me to hold it out against “him, who can destroy all the substance of my subjects “by insects, and imbitter every enjoyment of life, at his “pleasure; while I am unable to perceive him, and therefore, utterly incapable of fighting against him? Let “me then give up the fruitless contest, before I and my “people are utterly destroyed” Should any one say, that he could not thus have reflected with himself, it will lie upon him to prove it, which I think will not be an easy task; for he was not destitute of understanding, and therefore he could not want for ability; and if he wanted a disposition, that was his crime; and by so much the more that he was averse to the exercise of reason, and re-

flection, and disposed to listen to the suggestions of the wicked one, by so much the more must he be culpable, in the eye of sober reason. If he could have reasoned on this wise, why might he not have resisted the temptation of the wicked one? For Satan had no power to compel him whether he would or no; neither could he exercise any influence over his will, more than persuasion would effect: for after all, if Pharoah had seen it to be his interest to have acted a different part, and his pride would have suffered him to have pursued that interest, all the Devil's persuasions would have been unavailable; for he was under no necessity to comply with those persuasions, but such as arose from his own vicious dispositions, being a free agent, and at liberty to act for himself.

FROM these instances, with many others that might have been adduced, it appears evident, that for the Divine Being to decree his own conduct, under every circumstance, answers all the ends and purposes of his moral and providential government: without the aid of that most ridiculous of all notions, viz. God's having decreed the conduct of Moral Agents. Here we have propriety established; the liberty of moral agents secured; the moral character of the Deity defended from the worst of all imputations, viz. the decree of sinful actions; and the glory, dignity and authority of the divine Legislator, exhibited in all their infinite amiableness.

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LET no man henceforth quiet his own guilty conscience in the practice of vice, by saying, it was decreed that I should do all this wickedness, and therefore I cannot avoid it. I am under a fatal necessity, and can no more change my mode of action, then the planetary worlds can alter their courses: and therefore, it is in vain for me to attempt a reformation; though the sacred scriptures press it with so many forcible arguments and exhortations. But know of a surety, O wicked man, that the day is coming when you shall be judged for all your sins; when you shall be fully convinced that your conduct has not been the effect of a divine decree, but of the perverseness of your rebellious and stubborn heart. And be assured of it, you shall then receive a full recompence for all your impieties, if you continue in your present course. Let me therefore leave you, to the lashes of your own conscience, and the mercy of God, intreating that you may be influenced to break off your sins by righteousness; and return to the Lord.

S E C T. II.

*On Divine Prescience, shewing that it furnishes
no Argument in favour of absolute Moral
Necessity.*

THE most approved theological Writers, of every age, have generally professed their belief in the FOREKNOWLEDGE of God, and have considered it as a distinguishing, incommunicable, perfection of the Deity, which perfectly comprehends all the possible events, and transactions of time. Having no intention to combat the point with unbelievers, or to advance any thing upon the subject, but what immediately relates to the object of this Treatise, I choose to pass over their objections, who deny the DIVINE PRESCIENCE, in silence. Taking that for granted, therefore, which has obtained the credit of good men, in all ages; which is clearly revealed in the sacred scriptures; and easily deduced, from general, received notions of the Deity: I will consider this *Divine Perfection,*

Perfection, only in its connection with *Moral Agency*, and attempt to explore its influence on the existence of *Moral Evil*, and on the sinful conduct of rational beings.

SOME Divines have endeavoured to derive an argument from DIVINE PRESCIENCE, in favour of the Doctrine of absolute Necessity; reasoning after this manner; *If the Divine Being foresaw all the actions of rational creatures, with certainty, then their actions must have been certain, and could not have been otherwise than what they are. For, if their actions are not certain, then fore-knowledge is not certain; but foreknowledge is infallibly certain, and, therefore, their actions must be certain. If their actions be certain, then they are necessary: they cannot be otherwise, than as the Divine Being foresaw them, in his eternal mind.* Rational creatures, then, cannot act in a different manner, from what they do act. For instance, the Antediluvians, according to this system, could not have done otherwise, than provoke the Lord to destroy them, by an universal deluge, (But why do I say, provoke the Lord; for, surely, he cannot be provoked with those actions and events which he has made necessary, by an immutable decree.) The men of Sodom could not have avoided living in their filthy practices: the nations after the flood could not have done otherwise than have turned idolaters: and David had no power to have refused committing those two abominable sins, adultery and murder!

To confirm their argument, they say, *Every action is the effect of some cause: and as most actions are produced by secondary causes, every action may be traced up to its first cause. If the actions of rational creatures, depend upon a mutable cause, they cannot be certain; God foreknows them with certainty, therefore, they must be certain, they cannot, therefore, depend on a mutable cause, such as, the free will of a mutable agent; but must depend upon an immutable cause, or the will of an immutable agent.* There is no immutable agent, but God, and, therefore, if actions are certain, their original cause must be in God. And all the intermediate causes, as they must be certain to secure the certainty of actions, so they must depend upon the immutable agency of him, who is the first immutable cause of every action and event; for if any one of those intermediate causes should fail, the action or event dependent, would necessarily fail, and then it would not be certain: but all actions are certain, because, God foreknows them with certainty, and, therefore, they only depend upon his *immutable agency*; and owe their existence to a *divine influx*. They are the objects of his positive decree: for all actions and events, which owe their existence to a Divine Agency, must be the objects of his determining counsel: which clearly brings the matter to this conclusion, that God can only *foreknow* those actions and events, which he has decreed; and no action or event, dependent on the will of a free agent, is foreknown by him: but
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all actions and events are *foreknown* by him ; therefore, there is no such action or event, as depends on the *free-will* of a *Moral Agent*, and, consequently, there is neither *Moral Action*, nor *Moral Agent*, in the universe, according to our ideas of *Moral Actions*, and *Moral Agency*. And if this mode of argument be admitted, the dispute is finally closed.

SOME make the certainty of actions to depend upon *physical causes* : but still it amounts to the same thing ; for, who is the *author* of *physical causes* ? Is not God ? And, if there are such *certain immutable* physical causes, existing in nature, that will secure the *certainty* of *events*, those *causes* must owe their *origin* to God, or else they must exist of themselves, or by the agency of some other being. To say they exist of themselves, is to run into the heathen notion of fate ; which they considered as a power superior to the gods. To say that they owe their existence to the *will* of a *mutable* creature, is to derive an *immutable cause*, from *mutability*. Therefore, if there be *immutable physical causes*, of *Moral Evil*, they must owe their *origin* to the Deity, which makes God the *author* of *Moral Evil*, and creatures are no more than instruments, and as such, they are neither capable of *Moral Good*, nor *Moral Evil* ; and their actions, (as done by them) are not of the moral kind.

THUS, having stated the arguments made use of, by the advocates, for the doctrine of necessity; I hope, in a fair and candid manner, though not in their own words, (for that would have laid me under the necessity of transcribing many pages, without answering any good purpose to the reader, which I wish to avoid as much as possible :) I will now attempt to answer these modes of reasoning, upon rational grounds. It is obvious to me, and I trust it will appear so to others, that the whole weight of their argument, depends upon a supposition, that God can *foreknow* nothing, but what he has *positively decreed*; that he cannot *foreknow* the actions of a *free Agent*, or of one that is not in a state of *necessity*, from his own *compulsive agency*, or a *chain of causes*, which depends upon himself. But how is this hypothesis maintained? Upon the most diligent search into their writings, I find nothing to support it, but a mere supposition, that God's *foreknowledge* must proceed from his decree; or that he can only *foreknow* things by *evidence*. We have before proved, that God cannot *positively decree* *sinful* events, or the *sinful* actions of his creatures, and, therefore, his *foreknowledge* of them, cannot proceed from his decrees. And then, as to *evidence*, who is capable of defining what is *evidence*, with infinite wisdom? What *evidence* God had from the beginning, that his rational creatures, (placed in a state of probation, and left to the freedom of their own will, without any *compulsive agency* from himself,) would act such a
sinful

finful part as they have done, and are still doing, from one period to another, it is not for me to determine; and how *infinite Intelligence* comprehends all the thoughts and ways of *moral free Agents*, not in a *state of necessity*, is a mystery, that a finite being can never unveil. But the advocates for *necessity* say, he must have *certain evidence*; but, there can be no *certain evidence* of *uncertain actions* and *events*: whatever depends upon the free will of a mutable agent, must be uncertain: and, in short, there can be no certain evidence, but his *willing*, or *decreeing* those actions and events, at the same time securing their accomplishment, by his own agency; or, in other words, holding the first link, in the great chain of causes and events, in his own hand, and connecting all things with it, by his infinite wisdom, and unalterable counsel. And does not this amount to the same thing with the foregoing argument? And may not the sum of their reasoning be thus expressed? The evidence by which he *foreknew* finful actions, is, his having *decreed* them. He has *decreed* them, because he *foreknew* them: he *foreknew* them, because he had *decreed* them! If our opponents were to deal fairly, should they not prove one of these two points, without the aid of the other? But if they want to prove that God *decreed* finful actions, they do it by saying, he *foreknew* them; and if they are required to prove his *certain foreknowledge* of them, they do this by saying, he *decreed* them. And is this any thing more than saying,

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ing, it is so, because it is so? We have, by a solid argument, drawn from the nature and fitness of things, proved that it was impossible for God to decree sinful actions: and, from his *infinite Intelligence*, we prove that it was impossible for him not to have *foreknown* them.

THE arguments of our opponents, instead of establishing the Divine Prescience, prove that no such perfection belongs to the Deity: for, what is FOREKNOWLEDGE, thus explained, but the remembrance of what he has decreed? What is it more than any rational intelligent agent possesses? Do we not all remember what we have decreed to effect? And, if we had ability to carry our schemes into execution, and stability enough to abide in the same disposition of mind, would not this amount to all that is intended by these writers, when they treat of DIVINE PRESCIENCE, though upon a smaller scale? Suppose an ingenious Engineer had constructed a well-formed machine, to be moved by water, might he not *foreknow*, that it would move at whatever time he thought proper to pull up the flood-gates? Yet, upon these principles, the advocates for the doctrine of necessity explain DIVINE PRESCIENCE. They suppose that God has made his rational creatures, and placed them in such a situation, that, if they act at all, it must be in such a manner only; and his agency secures their acting, and on this ground he foreknew all their actions with certainty. This scheme is very applicable to the material, unintelligent

ligent parts of the universe: but it ill applies to *rational Moral Agents*, governed by laws, and not by agency; for it entirely overturns the idea of *Moral Government* and *Agency*, and renders the giving of laws, totally vain and useless; except we can persuade ourselves, that they answer the end of weights or springs, to put rational beings in motion: yet this they cannot do, in criminal actions, for *there*, they only act as restraints, and *that*, only, in a very weak and imperfect manner. They cannot serve as criminal laws to inflict punishments, for such laws were never framed for beings that have no will of their own, beings in a state of absolute necessity, as all those are, whose actions are made certain, by a certain cause originating in the Deity. If, therefore, we had nothing more to offer against the arguments drawn from DIVINE PRESCIENCE, in favour of the doctrine of *necessity*, what has been already observed, sufficiently discovers its glaring absurdity, and inconsistency with common sense, to make every unprejudiced mind, turn from it with just abhorrence and indignation.

I HAVE ever considered DIVINE PRESCIENCE, as the *foreknowledge* of actions performed by intelligent creatures, without the influence of a Divine Agency; and as comprehending those *events*, which do not *originate* with the Deity, as their *first cause*. And, if we could suppose the actions and events of time, to have been ever so different from what they are, that God would have *fore-*
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known them with the same exactness, with which he *fore-knew* the actions and events which daily come to pass: the *certainty* of his PRESCIENCE, not depending on the *natural certainty* of *events*, but upon his *infinite wisdom*. And to suppose that DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE depends entirely upon decrees, power, and immutability, for its certainty, is to reduce it to *memory*, or to the *knowledge* of what has been decreed; it is to obliterate it at once, as a distinct perfection of the Deity. But, instead of presuming to account for God's *foreknowledge* of future events, by saying, he decreed them; would it not be much better to resolve it into his *infinite intelligence*? And does not this appear the most rational way of accounting for his *foreknowledge* of *sinful events*? *Events*, which cannot be thought to derive their existence from him, as their *first cause*, as we have already clearly demonstrated. And how it came to pass, that any man ever attempted to account for the *foreknowledge* of God, on any other principle, I confess, I am utterly at a loss to conceive.

IF we suppose, and surely we may, that the actions of rational creatures are their own, i. e. the actions of *free agents*; could not the Divine Being *foreknow* those actions? If he could not, then his *foreknowledge* would not be *infinite*; for that knowledge cannot be *infinite*, which does not comprehend every thing: which brings the matter to this point, either that God has not made a *free, Moral Agent*, or else, that he does not *foreknow*, what
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that Agent will do, when left to the *freedom* of his own will. Our opponents say, God does *foreknow*, with certainty, all actions and events, and, therefore, he has not left any of his creatures at liberty to act freely from themselves. According to this mode of argument, there is no *free Agent* in the universe, consequently, no action of a *moral kind*, and, therefore, no penal evil, either in this world, or in the world to come. This brings the argument of our opponents to a palpable contradiction, in two points; for there are actions of a *moral kind*, and God *foreknew* them from all eternity; thus, both the above conclusions naturally resulting from their scheme, are repugnant to divine revelation, the nature and fitness of things, and even to common sense.—If they say, the Divine Being knows all things; yet, according to their hypothesis, he can only know those events which owe their *origin* to himself. This is affirming, that *sin originated* in God, and amounts to a contradiction: God is perfect goodness, and holiness; yet, according to them, he has given existence to *Moral Evil*, and is the first cause of all the wickedness that ever has been, or shall be, in the world! And if they assert, that the Deity does not *foreknow* the *free actions* of *Moral Agents*, then they limit the extent of his *knowledge*; and he ceases to be a God of *infinite Intelligence*; which contradicts the nature of his Essence. To such difficulties are men reduced, when they follow systematic plans, instead of adhering to simple truth.

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BUT, let us admit that God *can foreknow* the actions of *free Agents*, when left at *liberty*, and see what absurdity will thence ensue. Then it may be said, that the **DIVINE PRESCIENCE** is incomprehensible; and we are not able to determine on what principle the Deity foreknows the free actions of his creatures. And does not this, in our view, aggrandize this incommunicable perfection of the Deity? Are not all God's incommunicable perfections inexplicable to us? And do we know on what principle any of those perfections act?—Which way does the Divine Being exert an almighty agency? Which way did he create the heavens and the earth of nothing? How does he perceive, at one glance, myriads of objects, and their operations?—Can we account for any of these things? Or are they reducible to human understanding?—Why then should the creature of his hand, presume to comprehend the way by which God *foreknows* the *free actions* of *Moral Agents*? Can any thing be concealed from *infinite Intelligence*? Or was it necessary that God should deprive free Agents of their liberty, that he might *foresee* their future conduct? Or did he create them incapable of acting without his own directing Agency?

BUT after all, it may be said, the question returns upon us: Does not God foreknow the actions of *intelligent creatures* with *certainty*? and must not those actions be *certain*? Or may they happen to be otherwise, than as
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he *foresaw* them? and if not, are not men in a state of *Necessity*.

IN answer to these queries, it may be proper to ask whether FOREKNOWLEDGE be the cause of those actions, and of their *certainty*? Knowledge, whether it be *foreknowledge* or *after-knowledge* can never be deemed the *cause* of any thing, and therefore it can never be considered as the *cause of certainty*. Our opponents impute *that* to events, *which* belongs to foreknowledge. DIVINE PRESCIENCE is infinite, and cannot err; but the objects of it are the *actions* of fallible *free Agents*, *actions* of a *moral nature*, and consequently dependent on the *will* of Moral Agents, and therefore may be of this, or of the other kind; but whatever kind they may happen to be, *infinite Intelligence* is sufficient to foreknow them, or else it would not be *infinite*: for such is the DIVINE PRESCIENCE, that God *foresaw* what his creatures would do, under every possible circumstance, or situation of their existence. But does his *foresight* make the actions of *free Agents* any the more *necessary*? Their *necessity* or *certainty* must therefore be derived from some *other cause*, than that of *foresight*: consequently, to derive the *certainty* of actions from *thence*, is only taking that for granted which remains to be proved, namely, that God can *only foresee* those actions and events which depend on his sovereign agency. But the words of the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah,

miah hold out a very different *Language*. * And so do all the dispensations of the divine providence, by which he warns, exhorts, and threatens mankind, when they turn aside to the wicked desires and designs of their own hearts. Does the language of God, delivered from men by his servants the prophets, convey any idea, that in the least borders on the doctrine of necessity, or intimates that the actions of men are so *fixed by preordination*, as to prevent their acting a different part, from what they do. Of what use therefore are those admonitions, if our ac-

* Jer. 38. 17.—23. “ Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith
 “ the Lord. —If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon’s
 “ princes, then thy Soul shall live, and this City shall not be burnt with
 “ fire, and thou shalt live, and thine house. But if thou wilt not go forth
 “ to the king of Babylon’s princes, then shall this City be given into the
 “ hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt
 “ not escape out of their hand. And Zedekiah said unto Jeremiah, I am
 “ afraid of the Jews that they are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver
 “ me into their hand, and they mock me. But Jeremiah said they shall
 “ not deliver thee: obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I
 “ speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.
 “ But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the Lord hath shewed
 “ me; And behold all the women that are left in the king of Judah’s
 “ house, shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon’s princes, and those
 “ women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed
 “ against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away
 “ back. So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chal-
 “ deans, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by
 “ the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be
 “ burnt with fire.” Here is a full display of the INFINITE INTELLIGENCE
 of the Divine Being, and a revelation of what should be the result of two
 opposite kinds of conduct.

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tions are absolutely predetermined? Should it be asserted, that they enter into the scheme of divine providence, as a means of securing the objects of his *foreknowledge*: it is sufficient to our purpose, to be able to say, that those admonitions, warnings, &c. were directly calculated to operate against, and to *check* those very actions which *infinite intelligence* foresaw his creatures would commit, and were guilty of committing, notwithstanding all his remonstrances and threatenings, with no other view, that we can perceive, but that of preventing their wickedness: unless we can suppose that the Divine Being makes use of art and finesse, to deceive and impose upon his creatures. But, though the actions of men should be deemed contingent in themselves, yet such is the infinite intelligence of the Divine Being, that he foresaw them without having contrived them, or secured their commission by his own agency.

SOME are ready to reprobate the idea of God's *foreknowing* events which are *contingent*, as if it were a thing impossible: and by the same mode of reasoning, the learned Greeks thought it impossible that God should raise the dead.—And if the fact did not prove it beyond a doubt; those who think it impossible for God to foreknow *contingent events*, would have thought it impossible for God to make an universe of material existences of nothing: for surely the latter is as impossible as the former. He that could make a world of nothing, can find nothing

difficult or hard, that is not opposite to truth and justice. —I do not ³mean, that it should be hence inferred, that actions and events can be produced, without a cause; for every effect must have a cause, and actions are the effects of causes, as well as the events dependent upon them. — But, is not a living active principle, a cause sufficient to produce actions? And do not all rational beings possess this principle, as we have already demonstrated? What need have we then, to make further enquiry after the causes of the actions of free Agents?

It may be asked, can the Divine Being foresee the cause of actions done by free Agents, and discern what course they would take, who are actuated by a principle of self-agency? If he cannot, then his foreknowledge becomes limited, there is a barrier that it cannot pass. But as this cannot be admitted, we must conclude, that he knows the springs of every action, in the minds of all his creatures, and what they will do when left to the freedom of their will. Thus, he foreknew how the mother of mankind would act, when tempted by the serpent; and how the temptation would operate. But an objector may say, was there any thing in the nature of Eve, while innocent, that could induce her to listen to the tempter? If there were, there was something in her nature wrong, and as it ought not to have been. If there were nothing suitable in her to accept the bait, how could she

she have given way to the tempter? She did give way, which proves that there was something in her nature that inclined her to do as she did. — But was that wrong? — This may be a question difficult to solve. — *Emulation*, and a *limited capacity*, might be suitable to the object proposed by the serpent, i. e. the increase of knowledge, and a higher state of existence. — But can we say, that either of these were wrong? — A *limited capacity* was unavoidable in a creature, and therefore could not be wrong. — And a spirit of *emulation* seems to have been wisely implanted in the mind of every rational being, by the Deity, and is not a *defect* of nature, but the contrary; and therefore, perfectly right and fit. — Yet, how easy is it to perceive, that *emulation*, with a *limited capacity*, might be the *cause* of inducing her to listen to the artful suggestions of the adversary. — Had there been no innate desire to rise to a higher state of perfection, Satan's proposal would have been no temptation. And if no such desire had possessed her mind, she had wanted one considerable motive to guard her against sinning. — This truly exalted disposition, might be the *cause* of Lucifer's revolt? — But, is God to be blamed, for making his rational creatures with this noble disposition? — Surely no! — The fault was in them, and in not directing this principle to its proper end: for they were pre-advertised, and premonished, by that positive law which was given them, as a test of their obedience. Had they directed this disposition to the right object, (for

which purpose their understanding was sufficient) it would have contributed greatly to confirm them in their allegiance to the Divine Lawgiver. Should any object to the idea of guiding this disposition by the understanding, I would only observe, that prior to the introduction of sin, all the inferior powers of the mind may be supposed to be under the direction of the understanding; and since, they have stood in need of its direction and assistance, and are unserviceable to us without it. Without the assistance of the *understanding*, Courage, would become fool-hardiness.—Fear, meant for our preservation, would degenerate to painful timidity, and prove our destruction.—Self-love, would degenerate into vile self-adoration.—Love to the creatures, would verge to idolatry.—Emulation, would turn to envy. — Prudence, would degenerate into covetousness.—And the rest of the passions and affections, would fail to answer any good purpose; and might as soon be perverted to injury, as subserve the purposes of good, without the assistance of the *understanding*.

G O D was perfectly acquainted with the nature and properties of Eve, as the work of his own hands; and his infinite wisdom could easily foresee, that she would give way to the temptation. But if any one ask me, how could he foresee her revolt, if she were not in a state of absolute necessity? I answer, I cannot tell. But if his knowledge be *infinite*, it could not be hid from him: and if Eve was

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a *Moral Agent*, she was not in a state of *absolute necessity*. I am not able to conceive, how he exerts an omnipotent agency; but that he does so, is evident from the works of creation and providence. — I am not able to perceive how he foresees future events, without being the cause of those events: but the word of God has declared it to be so, and I am bound to believe it. — “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself,” is a sentence, that proves the cause of destruction to have been *in themselves*, and *of themselves*: and God’s foreknowledge of sinful actions and events, is repeatedly asserted in the sacred volume of Revelation; and yet we have proved, that he cannot be the cause of those actions and events. — How often has he foretold the wicked conduct of men, by his servants, the prophets; as, the stubbornness of Pharoah, — the cruelty of Hazael, king of Syria, — the malicious conduct of the Jews, in crucifying Christ, — the wicked conduct of the Gentiles towards his followers, and their resistance of the gospel. But will any man say, that these actions and events were owing to his agency, or originated with himself?

THERE is, therefore, no argument deducible from the foreknowledge of God, that is sufficient to prove the *absolute certainty of sinful events*, or that rational beings are *necessitated to commit those sins*, which they are guilty of. For the foreknowledge of God has no influence on

the conduct of men, any more than the historian's pen has an influence on those actions which it records.—And though it be as exact and minute in every particular, as the faithful mirror which represents the images that pass before it, yet it has no more influence on actions, than the mirror has on the passing objects. — It is one thing to *foresee* an event, and another to be the *cause* of that event.—Foreknowledge is no more the *cause* of events, than after-knowledge; and as we have before proved, that God has not positively decreed the existence of sinful actions and events; and that he is not the *cause* of sin; therefore, his foreknowledge, while it comprehends sinful actions and events, with *certainty*, is not the *cause* of that *certainty*.

IT may still be asked, by what *Evidence* does the Divine Being foreknow *sinful* actions and events, if he has not secured their certainty, by some connection of *causes*, of which he himself is the *first* cause? I cannot suppose that the Deity foreknows any thing without *Evidence*: but that *Evidence* cannot be explored by a *finite* mind. “Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?” It would be the height of arrogance and presumption, in one of the lowest order of intelligent beings, to attempt determining by what *Evidence* infinite Wisdom foreknows *sinful* actions, and their consequent events. Why should any man be so
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insufferably vain, as to suppose, that the Divine Being has no *modes* of Evidence, but what meet his absurd conjectures; while daily experience evinces, that the bulk of mankind are incompetent to judge of the *Evidence*, by which the learned Philosopher knows certain truths relative to the natural world, and its various phænomena. A mathematician has clear *Evidence* of the truth of certain aphorisms and axioms, which a stranger to that science, must be totally ignorant of. The unlearned can form no idea of the *Evidence* by which the great Sir Isaac Newton knew the respective motions of the planetary worlds, their magnitude, distances, gravitation, and attraction. — Yet, there is an infinitely greater distance between the Deity and the wisest Philosopher, than there can be between the learned and unlearned. Would not the literati despise the ignorant and conceited novice, who should presume to say, that Sir Isaac Newton had no Evidence of the truth of his propositions, but such as he himself is capable of comprehending. And, because he cannot find out any other Evidence, by which Sir Isaac could know these things, except that of having created them, he therefore concludes, that he must have been the author of those worlds, and of their motions; for it is impossible, exclaims the ignoramus, that he should have had any other *Evidence*, by which to know their movements. Just, with the same good sense, the Necessarian affirms, that God has no evidence of future events, but such as

he is acquainted with ; and because he cannot find out any evidence, by which the Deity could foreknow those events, but that of having decreed them, he consequently affirms, that he must have decreed them.—If one man, more wise and learned than others, be *able to know* things by evidences, which the ignorant are unable to understand, how much more must this be the case with God, and the evidences by which he *foreknew* all the conduct of his creatures, before time commenced? And if one man be unable to judge of the *Evidence*, by which another knows objects, which he thinks impossible to be known ; how much less shall any man be able to perceive the *Evidence* by which infinite Wisdom comprehends all possible events.

SOME have asserted, that there can only be *three kinds* of evidence, by which the Divine Being can foreknow future objects and events : i. e. Self-evidence, or the existence of the objects foreknown.—Evidence, by connection, with other objects, on which they necessarily depend, as effects on their respective causes ; and that evidence which arises from his own decrees.—But God may have a *fourth kind of Evidence*, which is hidden from our eyes. Sir Isaac Newton, though a finite being, had *Evidence* of facts, which some men can never be taught to understand, though it be reduced to the most simple propositions,

positions, that can be devised, by the wisdom of the learned. How much more must an infinite mind, have *Evidence* of actions and events, which cannot be comprehended by intelligences of the most exalted kind, and of the most acute penetration.—But, from the second kind of *Evidence*, which may be called *collateral*, the Deity, possessed of *infinite intelligence*, might be able to foreknow future sinful actions and events, i. e. the nature of things, and their connections; the circumstances of his creatures, and their trials; and his own decrees; his having positively decreed all things, which do not affect Moral Agency; and, his having decreed to suffer those actions and events, which are sinful. If, therefore, we connect together, in one general idea, the *natures* and *connections* of things, God's *infinite discernment of causes and effects*, his *decrees of providence*, and *those of restraint*; according to which *decrees* he governs the world: his *decrees* respecting our *formation, connections, stations, enjoyments, trials, temptations, constitutions, powers, passions, appetites, opportunities, limitations*, and the *sufferance* of our sinful actions to a *certain degree*; we may easily conceive, that an *infinite mind*, in possession of all these things, must have certain evidence of the sinful conduct of men, without having positively decreed it. Nor is it presumption to conclude, that a being of *infinite intelligence*, in possession of all this *collateral Evidence*, should have perfect knowledge of future *sinful* actions and events, without having decreed them,

them, in a positive manner, and without being the efficient cause of them.

SHOULD it be enquired, What *Evidence* had God of Adam's fall, that comes within our notice, if he did not decree it? His determination to make such a being, was *Evidence* of his existence. His decree to make him a *Moral Agent*, mutable and peccable, to place him in a *state of probation*, by entering into a covenant with him, and to leave him to the *freedom* of his own will, would furnish *Evidence* of his liability to fall. His decree to suffer Satan, (a malicious spirit, whose disposition naturally led him to meditate and seek man's ruin) to assail Eve, at such a juncture, when she should be alone, afforded *Evidence* of her temptation. If he had decreed to suffer Satan not to tempt her, in any other way, that would be *Evidence* of his tempting her in that way only. God's knowledge of the Agent's subtlety, and of the power of flattery and deceit, when exercised on an innocent, unsuspecting mind, of the imbecility of the tempted, and of her susceptibility of impressions, from one that should pretend the highest friendship, would go very far towards furnishing *Evidence* of her defection. A perfect knowledge of the effects of her sin, of her natural affection to her husband, of his attachment to her, and of her ability to practise each soft and ensnaring art, might afford a presumptive *Evidence* of Adam's fall. The Deity must have
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been in possession of all these matters from eternity, from his intimate acquaintance with the nature and connection of things; his having decreed to make man, to place him in the state of a probationer, to suffer the tempter to assault Eve, when she should be alone, and to suffer Eve, when fallen, to tempt Adam.

SHOULD it be asked, but how did God *foreknow* that Satan would become a fallen Spirit? God might have as clear evidence of his defection, from circumstances, occasions, and susceptibility of impressions, from things that would exist, by his own agency, (yet, in themselves, perfectly innocent) as he had of Adam's fall: and if the circumstances were laid before us, we might see it to be so, without having recourse to that most contradictory of all notions, which makes God the primary cause of moral evil, and places Moral Agents in a state of *absolute necessity*.

THE above short hints abundantly manifest the probability of God's having a clear view of future sinful actions, from *Evidence* that comes within our own observation: and if he may be supposed to foresee future events from *Evidence*, that we are able to discern, how much more must he be able to foresee them from *Evidence* that is beyond the limits of a created mind! So that to say the least, concerning the conduct of those who have
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founded an argument in favour of *Necessity*, on the FORE-KNOWLEDGE of God, they certainly have been building upon an hypothesis which has no foundation in truth, but altogether depends upon the reducing of DIVINE PRE-SCIENCE, to the comprehension of a finite understanding.

To state the matter then, in as plain and impartial a manner as possible. There appear to be difficulties arising on either hand. If we say, that the sinful conduct of men is made *necessary* by the decrees of God, and that *Moral Agents* have no power to act otherwise, than as they do; then, it follows, that God is the efficient cause of *Moral Evil*, that rational beings, though they willingly do that which is contrary to the law of nature, are not culpable, because they cannot avoid it, all things considered; and that God will punish them for that which is not their crime, but their misfortune. On the other hand, if we say, that God has left his rational creatures to act according to their will, under certain limitations and restraints, it is almost impossible for us to conceive, how he could *foreknow* their *sinful* conduct, with certainty; or how he could have *certain Evidence* of those actions, which depended not upon his *own agency*, but the *free will* of *mutable beings*.

FROM the former supposition, i. e. that God fore-knew nothing but what he had decreed, there ariseth a self-

self-evident contradiction of known facts; such as, that God could not be the *first cause* of Moral Evil; and that rational creatures cannot be any other than *Moral Agents*: both which are contradicted by the supposition of God's having decreed the sinful actions of men. — But, from the latter, there ariseth no contradiction to any known fact; and it only renders the DIVINE PRESCIENCE an incomprehensible perfection, which it most undoubtedly is. Who then, being free from the slavish chains of prejudice, would hesitate for a moment, which of the two he should adopt? Yet, on this very uncertain ground of God's only foreknowing what he had decreed, numbers have laboured to establish the doctrine of *absolute necessity*. But, only take away this link, and *the whole chain* of their reasonings, (to prove that God has decreed the sinful conduct of men, and made their actions necessary) is totally broken.

BUT, is an hypothesis, so doubtful as this, sufficient to rest an argument upon, which directly involves in it the destruction of *Moral Agency*, and impeaches the *Moral character* of the Deity?—Because we cannot conceive, how it is possible for the Divine Being to *foreknow* the actions of *Moral Agents*, which he has not *positively decreed*, shall we presume to say, there are no such actions, and be justified in drawing this rash conclusion? From which common sense revolts with horror and indignation!

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AND yet, they who espouse the cause of *necessity*, have no other basis to rest their hypothesis upon, but that which is supported at the expence of giving up both *Moral Government* and *Moral Agency*. For only admit, that *infinite Intelligence* can foreknow the free actions of Moral Agents, and their main pillar is gone: yet, surely that cannot be *infinite Intelligence*, which does not foreknow every possible transaction and event of time. God's *intelligence is infinite*, and, therefore, he must have foreknown the free actions of Moral Agents, though he had not positively decreed them: and, therefore, their main pillar is gone.

S E C T. III.

Some Passages in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which have been supposed favourable to the Doctrine of Christian, Philosophical, or Absolute Necessity, considered.

IF *absolute Moral Necessity*, were a doctrine taught in the word of divine Revelation, I should think it my duty to believe it, though I should not be able to perceive its agreement with some other truths, unequivocally asserted there. For those antient records, are our only certain rules of faith. But, I have hitherto considered them, as directly opposed to that doctrine; and highly calculated to establish the doctrine of *Moral Agency*, beyond all possibility of contradiction. It is true, persons of opposite sentiments, have frequently pretended to support their jarring opinions, by arguments and evidences, drawn from these invaluable treasures, naturally concluding, that

that the evidences, fairly derived from thence, must carry the strongest conviction to the minds of those men, who believe in a divine Revelation. And it frequently happens, that persons engaged in a dispute with each other, plead scriptural authority, for their opposite sentiments. The avowers of *Philosophical and Moral Necessity*, endeavour to avail themselves of expressions, dropt from the pen of inspiration, and pretend to say, that the word of God is on their side the question.

IT must be confessed, that the doctrine of *divine Sovereignty*, is very clearly and fully asserted there: so also, is *an universal Providence*: and the intervention of *a divine Agency*, over ruling all things, to make them subserve the purposes of the Deity, so that, *the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain*, (Ps. 76. 10.) But that the word of God holds out any such doctrine, as that of *absolute Philosophical, or Moral Necessity*, I trust, no subtlety of argument will ever be able to demonstrate to him, who has entertained suitable ideas of *Moral Agency*, and who has not been already warped aside by Error.

SOME of the Writers on the side of *absolute Moral Necessity*, have given us a long string of quotations, from the word of God, in support of their hypothesis, many of which no more favour that sentiment, than they favour the popish doctrine of merits, and works of superogation.

gation. Such as, *I withheld thee from sinning against me.* (Gen. xx. 6.) — *The stars fought against Sisera.* (Judg. v. 20.) — *The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up.* (1 Sam. ii. 7.) — *They hearkened not to the voice of their Father; because the Lord would slay them.* (1 Sam. ii. 25.) i. e. he did not give them the grace of repentance. — Their sins were of such a nature, and the dishonour done to him, thereby, so great, that he would not pardon them; and, therefore, suffered them to go on, till he had brought them to destruction. — *Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all.* (1 Chron. xxix. 12.) — *Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah, &c. whose spirit God had raised up, to build the house of the Lord.* (Ezra. i. 5.) — *Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.* (Job v. 7.) — Trouble is the effect of sin, and the consequent curse entailed on mankind. All are sinners; and, therefore, all must endure trouble: and, as all are born in a state of sin; in this sense they are born to trouble: but, what has this to do with *absolute Moral Necessity*; or the *Necessity* of committing such particular sins, at such particular times? — *He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.* (Job v. 12.) — But these are evil enterprises that he prevents; therefore, no argument is deducible from hence, to prove the *absolute necessity* of *Moral Evil*. — *Behold, he taketh away. Who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, what doest thou?* (Job ix. 12.) — *He is in one*
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mind,

mind, and who can turn him? (God is immutable) *And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. He performeth the thing that is appointed for me.* (Job xiii. 14.)—Referring, no doubt, to the various circumstances and providences attending him in life; and not to his moral conduct.—*When he giveth quietness, who then can give trouble? And when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.* (Job xxxiv. 39.)—This passage is expressive of the uncontrolled sovereignty of God's will, in his providential dispensations, which cannot be counteracted.—*The kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.* (Psal. xxii. 28.)—*Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it, &c.* (Psal. cxxvii. 1.) Ascribing the success of every enterprise to God's Providence.—*The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass: and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.—This is the purpose, which is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?* (Isa. xiv. 24,—27.)—Who can dispute the stability of the Divine purposes? But will any man attempt to say, “He has purposed that men shall do wickedly, and stretched out his hand to make them transgress his righteous laws?” His purposes are good, and not evil: and in the fore-cited passage, they relate to the punishment
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of sin, and not to the commission of it; nor to an influencing agency, that compels men to work wickedness: but rather, to the over-ruling of mens evil dispositions, to chastise the workers of iniquity. How any man, of common reflection, could think of introducing this, and the other fore-cited passages, in proof of the *absolute necessity* of *Moral Evil*, I am at a loss to divine: and to me it appears, as a glaring evidence of the difficulty these Gentlemen are at, to find any thing to their purpose in the writings of the old and new testament.—I should think it absolutely trifling with my reader's time, to employ arguments to prove that the fore-cited passages do not apply to the subject of *moral Necessity*: but to God's *providential government*, extended over all his creatures, and all their actions. Many other passages have been quoted, of much the same kind, well suited to prove the exertions of a *divine agency*, in the punishment of sinners, by various instruments, properly adapted to that purpose.

SOME of those passages which appear to carry in them the strongest evidences, in favour of the doctrine of *absolute Moral Necessity*; such as, the crucifixion of Christ,—*the hardening* of Pharoah's heart,—*the selling* of Joseph into Egypt,—*God's using* the Assyrian Monarch as an instrument of his vengeance, to chastize the ungodly nations, &c. I have already considered in the body of this work, And I will now consider those other passages, which have

been thought to carry in them the strongest evidence in favour of the doctrine of *absolute Moral Necessity*.

JOSEPH the Patriarch, said unto his Brethren, *It was not you that sent me hither, but God.—As for you, ye thought evil; but God meant it unto good, &c.* Gen. 45. 7. 8. 150. 20. They out of envy would have murdered him; but God would not suffer it: and when they sold him into Egypt, they designed it for his destruction: but God had other views, in suffering them to persecute him; *he meant it for good*; and over-ruled this event, to advance him to power, intending to use him as an instrument to preserve the family of Jacob alive, in time of famine. But Joseph cannot be supposed to impute their wicked conduct to the Deity, as though God had influenced them to hate him, and persecute him: he only meant, that he suffered this for wise ends.

WHEN Nathan the prophet told David, saying, *Thus saith the Lord, behold I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.* (2. Sam. 12. 11.) And when this prediction was so exactly fulfilled, (see chap. 16. 22.) we clearly perceive, the infinite perfection of divine prescience, and the universal providence of God, which is immediately concerned in every event, either to restrain
the

the evil dispositions of wicked men, or to let them loose, for the punishment of transgressors. But who can imagine that the *counsel* given to *Absalom*, and his *wicked compliance*, was the effect of a divine agency, or that *any Necessity*, but his own depraved inclinations, compelled him to comply with it. And when the Lord says, *I will raise up evil in thine house,—and I will give thy wives, &c.* the meaning must be, that he would take away the *bridle of restraint*, that kept *Absalom* from his purposes.—And that he would give David's wives into his power: and not that he would *impel* him to commit that wickedness. If we take a view of the former part of his history, we shall easily perceive, that he needed no impulse to do evil.

The Lord hath said unto him (to Shimei) curse David, (2. Sam. 16. 10.) The meaning, is, not that God had spoken to him, and given him an order to do this, much less that he had influenced his heart, to commit such a wickedness; but that Shimei had a longing desire in his heart to curse David, and God had now taken away the bridle of restraint, viz. The *authority* of David in the state, and left him at full liberty to indulge his wicked inclination,

WHEN it is said, *The Lord hath put a lying Spirit in the Mouth of all these thy prophets.* (1. Kings, 22, 22. 23.)

The meaning is clearly this, As evil lying Spirits, are

always ready to impose upon mankind, from a malicious pleasure, which they take in promoting their ruin. Thus the Lord intended to bring destruction upon *Ahab*; an evil agent proposing and offering his services on this occasion, he was pleased to accept of them, and suffered him to carry his own scheme into execution. The prophets imposed upon, were evil, lying, false prophets, such as *Ahab* delighted in; and they well deserved this punishment.—But, does this prove, that the Divine Being influenced any one of the parties to commit wickedness, while he avenged the blood of *Naboth*, upon the house of *Ahab*? Does it not rather shew, that the evil Spirit was a free Agent, and acted from his own wicked dispositions? And that God availed himself of his agency, to fulfil his own designs.

The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. (Prov. 16. 1.) Since the introduction of moral evil, every right inclination, thought, or purpose in the heart; and the justness of all our words, may with the greatest propriety be attributed to God. But the sin and wickedness that is in the heart, and that which proceeds out of the lips of men, can by no means be imputed to him: nor do such passages serve the cause of *absolute moral necessity*, any more than those, which are expressive of the gracious interpositions of a divine Providence, in favour of mankind. Such as, *The heart of man deviseth*

deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps. — Many are the devices of a man's heart; but the counsel of the Lord shall stand. — The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. (Prov. xvi. 9. xix. 21. Psal. xxxvii. 23.)

O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (Jer. x. 23.)
A late Reverend and learned Author, on this passage, says, “ The Prophet knew that it was not with him, nor
“ with any of the godly, to escape the judgments that
“ were coming upon them: that they were entirely in
“ the hands of the Lord, to be guided, directed and dis-
“ posed of, at his pleasure.” — “ They could take no step
“ aright without him.” — But, could they do nothing that
was wrong without him? — Are men alike impotent, to
do evil, or to do good, without him? — We are con-
vinced, and that from the holy Scriptures, that good men
need the influences of the holy Spirit, to enable them to
perform that which is truly good: and that we are, by
reason of the imperfection of our nature, unable to do
that which is truly and perfectly good, without a divine
agency. — But this affords no argument to prove, that
mankind are under *an absolute moral necessity*, to do such
particular acts of sin. — Or that they have no power to
avoid walking in those particular ways of ungodliness, to
which they have addicted themselves. It only expresses,
their moral inability to do that which is really good:

and their entire dependence on a divine influence, in matters purely religious. *Natural physical necessity*, I readily admit of: and *spiritual necessity*, in the conversion and salvation of sinners: and only oppose *that kind of necessity*, which tends to represent God as the *author of sin*, and to exculpate the sinner; which I call, *absolute moral necessity*, to transgress the divine laws, arising from a divine impulsive agency; or from such a fixed train of causes and effects, as cannot fail to secure the pre-determined wickedness.

SOME have imagined, that the words of Paul, (Rom. vii. 14,—25.) are a strong argument in favour of the doctrine of absolute moral necessity, where he represents his own imperfection, and incapacity to do the will of God, in that perfect manner which he wished; saying, *For I know that the Law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I, &c.* If it could be proved, that this inability originated in the agency of a foreign power, then it would be an argument for *absolute Moral Necessity*, in the sense of our opponents; but, while the Apostle attributes this to the depravity of nature, which was not wholly removed by regenerating grace, it ceases to be an argument in favour of *absolute Moral Necessity*, though it may be supposed to favour *philosophical Necessity*: for *Moral Necessity*, is a necessity to act

act according to the dictates of the will: but here Paul represents himself as acting contrary to his will, and against his inclination, doing that which he approved not. So that if he was under a *necessity*, in this case, which may well be admitted, it was a *physical*, and not a *moral necessity*. It was owing to the imbecility of his nature, and not to the bent of his inclination; for that was to do good perfectly: but he found it not in his power to come up to perfection, and cried out, *O, wretched man that I am!* &c.

OUR opponents suppose, that the words of Peter and Jude, favour the doctrine of *Necessity*; Peter says, that Christ was a *stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.* (1 Pet. ii. 3.) And Jude says, *There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, &c.* (Jude 4.) In both these passages, it is evident, that the Divine Being, for wise ends and purposes, has, in a sovereign way, and by his own appointment, left some of the human race to the blindness and hardness of their own hearts, to stumble at Christ, and to reject him: and, by the same ordination, others are left to act the part of hypocrites, and betrayers of our Lord and Saviour, and of his people. But this ordination does not prove, that God is either the author of their sin, or that the persons referred to were under an *absolute necessity*

necessity to act the part described, from *the irresistible impulsive agency of some foreign power*. Leaving men to follow their own natural inclinations, conveys to us a very different idea, to that of absolutely appointing them to commit such particular crimes, and decreeing the means that should effectually incline them to do so. The Divine Being could not but foresee what every agent would accomplish, or be disposed to accomplish, if left to follow the bent of his own inclinations, without control. And appointing any person to such a particular line of conduct, required no more than a decree, that nothing should prevent them from executing their own purposes, and following the devices and desires of their own hearts. There can be no necessity for adopting that strange, that monstrously absurd idea, which *necessitarianism* suggests, in order to explain the passages above cited, viz. that the Divine Being positively decreed their wicked conduct, and secures that decree, by the exertions of his own agency, so as to leave them no power to act a different part. As a certain author expresses himself, "Neither is *material* nature alone thus, *bound fast in Fate*. All other things, the *Human Will* itself not excepted, are no less tightly bound, i. e. effectually influenced and determined." O horrible blasphemy! Shall the perfectly Holy and the Good, bind mens wills to the violation of his righteous Laws, and then punish their inevitable misdeeds, with everlasting

everlasting destruction! God forbid, that ever such a thought should be entertained in our hearts!

THERE are many other passages to the same purpose with these above cited: but as their obvious meaning is to assert, and maintain the Divine Sovereignty, and his over-ruling the conduct of sinful agents, to chastise his people, when they forsake his laws: and not the doctrine of *absolute Necessity*, I will pass them over in silence; secure in my own apprehension, that no substantial evidence of *absolute Necessity*, whether moral or philosophical, can be fairly derived from the word of God: for then we should have a substantial evidence of that which cannot exist in the nature and fitness of things.

P A R T V.

Evidences of MORAL AGENCY, deduced from the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as it stands in direct opposition to ABSOLUTE, MORAL, and PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY.

EVIDENCES of Moral Agency, may be drawn from the general scope and design of divine Revelation, which is to point out to man, the way or manner in which he ought to conduct himself in this present state; from various circumstances or matters of fact, recorded in the book of God; and from detached passages, which evidently convey to us the idea of Moral Agency.—To render our present attempt as successful as may be, and the most likely to produce conviction in every impartial Reader, I will, *First*. Take notice of those Evidences of Moral Agency, derivable from certain circumstances or facts, recorded in the word of God; and then, *Secondly*, Consider some of those passages in that sacred Book, which are decidedly in favour of Moral Agency.

S E C T.

S E C T. I.

Some of the Evidences of Moral Agency, deducible from certain Circumstances, or Matters of Fact recorded in the Book of Divine Revelation.

I. **T**HE first, and most striking evidence of *Moral Agency*, in opposition to *absolute Moral Necessity*, is, that of God's prescribing equitable laws, pointing out the duty of men, both to himself as the Creator, and to each other as fellow creatures; and causing those precepts to be written in a book, and promulgated. If mankind were governed by agency, or by instinct, written laws would have been useless: for, where a being is conducted either by agency, the influence of motives, or by instinct, enjoining precepts can answer no purpose; for that supposes him to be, not under the controul of a foreign agency, but at full liberty to act for himself. And if at
liberty

liberty to act for himself, and uncontrolled by foreign agency, what mode of argument can any one adopt, that shall be sufficient to establish the doctrine of *absolute Moral Necessity*? Only leave man to himself, and the freedom of his own will; and the mutability of his nature supercedes the doctrine of *absolute Philosophical, or Moral Necessity*. To establish *Moral Necessity*, man must be as immutable as the Deity; yea, every thing in the universe must be immutable, that has any connection with his conduct; or else that kind of *Necessity* could not be secured. Every thing in the moral world must move together, like a vast machine, without the possibility of a fraction in any of its parts, for such a fraction would utterly undo *absolute Necessity*. But if every thing in the moral world move together, with that uninterrupted order, and all things stand linked and connected together in immutable bands, then the prescribing of laws could be of no service, except they can be supposed a part in the universal whole; and, in that case, their influence must be taken into the account; which must either be perfect and uniform, or imperfect and uncertain: facts prove that this influence is not perfect and uniform; and if it be imperfect and uncertain, then it is but ill calculated to become a link in the chain of *absolute Moral Necessity*, which utterly precludes the propriety and utility of written inculcated laws. This shews that the giving of laws,

is an evidence in favour of *Moral Agency*, as it stands opposed to *absolute Moral Necessity*.

It may be objected, that *Philosophical* and *Moral Necessity* depends upon external motives; and therefore does in no wise exclude the use of *Laws*, as means tending to promote that necessity, without which it could not be secured, any more, than an *end* can, without the use of proper means.

If this objection proves any thing, it is the very reverse of that for which it is advanced.—For with respect to the introduction of sin, and every sinful event, the giving of laws, and their influence, must have operated against, and not in favour of the *Necessity* of those events: for it must have tended to hinder those events from taking place, and therefore cannot be admitted, as means tending to secure, or to promote the *absolute Necessity* of *moral evil*. And if they were not given as means to secure the *absolute Necessity* of *Moral Evil*, the gift of them must furnish a substantial argument in favour of *Moral agency*, and go very far to prove, that *Moral Agents* are governed by *Laws*, and not by *external agency*.

II. WE may also deduce an argument in favour of *Moral agency*, from those *Exhortations* to duty with which the sacred scriptures abound. *Exhortations*, which are addressed to mankind, under various circumstances, both
to

to the righteous, and to the unrighteous, to excite the former to greater diligence in their religious course, and the latter, to turn from the error of their ways. If we reason seriously on this point, we shall be led to this conclusion; that, if mankind be in a state of *moral Necessity*, *Exhortations* are needless, and can have no meaning, except in the light of *motives*; in which they operate against sinful conduct, and of course, against the *absolute Necessity* of sinful *actions and events*; they cannot therefore be considered under the idea of *motives*, intended to secure the *absolute Necessity* of *sinful events*: and they do not act with that *certainty* necessary to *secure* the performance of that which is good, if we may judge from the conduct of the persons addressed; and the little effect which they, in general, produce on the minds of men: hence it appears very improper, to admit them as means to secure the *absolute certainty* of future actions and events: for all those means, which serve this purpose, must be absolutely *certain*, in their operations and effects upon the human mind, or else they are inadmissible, as means. But *Exhortations* have no such certain operation; and consequently, as opposed to sinful actions and events, they are inadmissible, and if so, they are altogether against the scheme of *absolute moral Necessity*; and the giving of them, only comports with infinite wisdom, under the idea of man's being a *Moral Agent*, and not in a state of *absolute moral Necessity*.

SUPPOSE

SUPPOSE that the Divine Being had decreed the rebellious conduct, and destruction of the people of Israel, in the times of *Ahab* and his successors; and of the Jews in the times of their wicked rulers, *Manasseh* and others; to what purpose was the commissioning of prophets to warn them, and to exhort them to turn from the evil of their ways? Certainly none. This method cannot be supposed, to have been a means of securing the object decreed; for if it had any influence, it must have operated against the decree: but what an extraordinary mode of conduct must they attribute to the Deity, who believe him to have first ordained the evil, and then to have sent his prophets to prevent the decree from being carried into effect! Such kind of deportment can never accord with the wisdom and goodness of the moral governor.—But on the ground of *moral agency*, in contradiction to *absolute moral Necessity*, the conduct of God, in delegating prophets to warn and exhort them, was wise and gracious; and furnishes no mean argument in vindication of the doctrine of *moral free agency*.

LET the unprejudiced reader take an impartial view of the subsequent exhortations, and I am persuaded he will perceive, that they perfectly correspond with the doctrine of *Moral free agency*, and are directly opposed to that of *absolute Moral Necessity*.

THE people of Israel, in the days of the prophet Ezekiel, entertaining notions nearly resembling those of the Necessarians of our day, charged the Divine Being with dealing unequally with his creatures. They said, *The way of the Lord is unequal.* In answer to this, the Lord said, *I will judge you every one according to his own ways: repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will you die, O house of Israel? They said, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? In answer to this, God said, As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Eze. xviii. 30. 32. xxxiii. 10. 12.)—Moses exhorted the people, saying, Now therefore, hearken O Israel unto the statutes, and unto the judgments which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. (Deut. iv. 1.)—The Lord expostulated with the people of Israel, and exhorted them, saying, Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. (Isa. i. 16. 17.) Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and*

and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the Lord who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (Isa. lv. 6. 7.) Go and proclaim these words towards the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you : for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep mine anger for ever. (Jer. iii. 12.) Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people : and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. (ibid. vii. 23.) Hereby confirming the words of his servant Moses, to the people of Israel, saying, Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess. (Deut. v. 33.)—Joshua exhorted the two tribes and half, when he sent them back to their own inheritance, after he had subdued the nations, saying, But take diligent heed to do the commandments and the law, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul. (Jof. xxii. 5.)

As the people of the Jews, under the legal covenant, were exhorted to the discharge of their duty ; so mankind in general are exhorted to their duty, under the gospel dis-

penfation.—John Baptift began his miniftry with calling the people to repentance. (Matt. iii. 2.) So did the Lord Jefus Chrift, faying, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* (Matt. iv. 17.)—Peter, the Apoftle of Chrift, alfo exhorted the people to repentance, on the day of Pentecoft; (fee A&ts ii. 38.) Yea, he exhorted Simon Magnus to *repent of his wickednefs, that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him.* (A&ts viii. 22.) He gave the fame exhortation to the Jews, when they wondered at the cure which had been performed on the impotent man, faying, *Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your fins may be blotted out.* (A&ts iii. 19.)—And the Apoftle Paul followed the fame example, faying, *At the times of this ignorance, God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.* (A&ts xvii. 30.)—Surely thefe holy men could not be *Necessarians*, for they addreffed men as *Moral Agents*, and not as persons in a *ftate of neceffity*.—The Lord Jefus Chrift, when he directed John the Divine to write unto the Seven Churches in Afia, exhorted them, faying, to the Church at Ephesus, *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy firft works, or elfe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candle-ftick out of his place, except thou repent.*—To the Church at Smyrna; *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*—To the Church at Pergamos; *Repent, or elfe I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight againft them with the fword of my mouth.*—To the Church at Thyatira;

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But that which thou hast already, hold fast till I come.—To the Church at Sardis; Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.—To the Church at Laodicea; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayst see. (Rev. ii. 5, 10, 16. iii. 2, 3, 18.)

Had the Churches been in a state of *absolute necessity*, these addresses must have been mere matters of *form*, and signified no more than an address made to a number of lifeless images, actuated by an agency behind the scenes, directing their every motion. But if it be pleaded, that these addresses are *agency*, intended to give motion to *Moral Beings*, and enter into the *scheme of Moral Necessity*, as a cause of action; then it must be proved, that the effects produced are certain, and that the efficiency of such causes is equal to that of natural causes, or to that of the regular movements of a well constructed machine. I grant, that exhortations addressed to men, when attended to, have an effect upon their minds, in proportion to the attention which they pay to them; but as that attention is voluntary, the effect of addresses made to the mind, depends upon the will of the person addressed, or else upon the *secret agency of a divine power*, bending

the will, and not upon the address made, as we have shewn before, in its proper place: and, therefore, addresses are not to be admitted as *the causes of absolute Moral Necessity*; for it would be easy to prove, that in nine instances out of ten, the *Moral Agent* acts contrary to that influence which they are supposed to have upon the will. These addresses, therefore, serve as collateral and presumptive evidence of *Moral Agency*, in direct opposition to *Moral Necessity*.

THE professed followers of our Divine Redeemer, are exhorted to the exercise of every grace, and every Christian virtue, and to the performance of every duty, civil, moral, and religious: which indicates, that those who are regenerated by the Spirit of God, continue to be *Moral Agents*, after that blessed renovation, and they are governed as such through the whole of their christian life: having rules prescribed for their conduct, and being excited to activity and diligence, by exhortations, enforced by suitable arguments, or motives, adapted to their feelings, or capacities. Christians, you are exhorted, *to add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these*

these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. i. 5,—11.)—Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.—Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.—*The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover a multitude of sins. (1 Pet. iv. 7, 8.)* The Christian warrior is exhorted to take unto him the whole armour of God, that he may be able to stand in the evil day. (Eph. vi. 13.) And he that runs in the Christian race, is exhorted, *so to run, that he may obtain; to lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset him, and to run with patience the race set before him: and that he may do this, he is exhorted, to gird up the loins of his mind, to be sober, and hope to the end. (1 Cor. ix. 24. Heb. xii. 6. 1 Pet. i. 13.)*—In all these instances it appears, that the Divine Being treats his people as *Moral Agents*, and not as *machines*, or persons in a state of *absolute Moral Necessity*. For, if that were the case, they would be passive, and exhortations would be totally unnecessary and vain: the propriety, therefore, of these exhortations, entirely depends on the doctrine of *Moral Agency*. On this

ground, they are highly proper, being peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the persons exhorted, and indicating some ability in men, to regard or disregard them; except, perhaps, in a few instances, where they are ironically addressed to the self-righteous, and self-sufficient Pharisee, to convince him of his impotency, and utter inability, to perform that which is the proper and peculiar work of the Deity, viz. the renovation of the heart.

III. ANOTHER argument may be drawn from the *Threatenings* contained in the word of God, (intended as a means to deter mankind from the commission of sin, and to excite them to acts of obedience) to prove the doctrine of *Moral Agency*, and overthrow that of *absolute Moral Necessity*. The word of God every where abounds with this kind of evidence. Out of this abundance, I shall only select a few passages, in confirmation of the proposition advanced; viz. that God has threatened mankind with punishment for their sins. When the Divine Being had created man, he entered into a covenant with him, in which he was threatened with death in case of disobedience. —When God had brought his people Israel out of Egypt, by the hand of his servant Moses, and was about to put them into possession of the promised inheritance, he addressed them in these words, *But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; and if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments,*

judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you, I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague; that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain; for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you: and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet, for all this, hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. (Lev. xxvi. 14.)—God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors. (Psal. vii. 11,—13.)—The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. (ibid, ix. 17.)—Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. (ibid, l. 22.)—Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them. (Isa. v. 11.)—And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, If ye will not hearken to me to walk in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, (but ye have not hearkened.) Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth. (Jer. xxvi. 4, 5, 6.)—

These

These threatenings, with many others, in the writings of Moses and the prophets, which might be introduced here, if it were thought necessary, shew, that God threatened the Israelites under the old testament dispensation.

THE Lord has also *threatened* mankind under the Gospel; but in an especial manner, those who make a profession of his name — *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place. (Rev. ii. 5.) — Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth. (ver. 16.) — Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. (chap. iii. 16.) — Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. (Heb. xiii. 4.) — How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? (chap. ii. 3.) — For it is impossible — If they fall away, to renew them again to repentance. (chap. vi. 4, 6.) — But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, &c. shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. (Rev. xxi. 3.) — Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? &c. &c. (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.) — And there shall in no wise enter into it, any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. (Rev. xxi. 27.) — For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him*
the

the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and out of the things which are written in this book. (Rev. xxii. 18, 19.) — Many more passages to the same purpose, might be adduced, to prove that God has awfully threatened mankind with punishments for their sins, under the new testament dispensation; but these, I presume, will be found sufficient.

THREATENINGS are considered as motives, by the advocates for *Necessity*, and no one will hesitate to say, that they have some weight with the considerate mind, as they tend to dissuade from the practice of sin; they did so on the mind of Eve, in the moment of temptation; for she recollected, and repeated over the denunciation, intended as a preventative, to deter our first parents from eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: and had not the serpent been able to shake her faith in the word of God, he could not have prevailed with her to have eaten the forbidden fruit. So far, then, it will be allowed, on all sides, that *Threatenings* have a tendency to prevent men from transgressing the laws of God, according to the measure of their faith in *those Threatenings*; and that they have no tendency to induce them to commit sin. From hence we conclude, that they operate directly against the *necessity* of *moral evil*, and sinful events,
according

according to the measure of their influence over the human mind. I would, therefore, ask the advocates for *Necessity*, how it accords with infinite Wisdom, to apply threatenings to the subjects of his Moral government, when he has previously appointed them to commit sin? And what links are they in the great chain of causes and effects, to secure the *absolute certainty* of sinful events? It is only on the ground of *Moral Agency*, that they can be supposed to comport with infinite Wisdom. On the contrary hypothesis, they are worse than useless; they discover the want of true policy in the Moral Governor; for in doing this, he throws impediments in the way to obstruct the accomplishment of his own schemes, and to retard the motions of that grand machine, by which all events are brought to pass; and opposes his own designs! With the least degree of discernment, the unprejudiced may see, that *Threatenings* furnish a strong presumptive argument in favour of *Moral Agency*, as it stands opposed to *Moral Necessity*.

IV. THE *promises* which God has made to his rational creatures, on conditions, suited to their situations and circumstances, with a design to excite them to obedience, furnish another argument in favour of the doctrine of *Moral Agency*; and in direct opposition to the *absolute necessity* of *moral evil*, and *sinful events*. For, on the supposition of one grand universal scheme of Providence,

dence, securing every action and event in the Moral world, I cannot perceive the use of promises made to men, to induce them to obey: when, according to the doctrine of Necessarianism, their disobedience was previously decreed!—Or which is the same thing, every thing so ordered in providence, and so connected together, as causes and effects, that there is not a possibility for any man to act otherwise than as he does! Unless indeed, they should maintain, that promises are intended to operate in the great machine of cause and effect, partially, i. e. upon some individuals, to prevent their going with the multitude, and as a check to hinder the too rapid progress of others, till matters should become ripe for execution. Spacious as this objection may appear, it has nothing in it solid; unless it can be proved, that promises have never been made, without producing an effect on those to whom they have been addressed; for, there are many instances on sacred record, wherein no effect has followed: as in the case of *Zedekiah*, when he consulted the prophet *Jeremiah*, on the best methods to be pursued for his own safety, when Jerusalem was going to be given up to the besiegers. “Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him, into the third entry that is in the house of the Lord; and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing: hide nothing from me. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not
“surely

“surely put me to death? And if I give thee counsel,
“wilt thou not hearken unto me? So Zedekiah the king
“swore secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the Lord
“liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to
“death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these
“men that seek thy life. Then said Jeremiah unto Ze-
“dekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the
“God of Israel, If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the
“king of Babylon’s princes, then thy soul shall live, and
“this city shall not be burnt with fire, and thou shalt
“live, and thine house. But if thou wilt not go forth
“to the king of Babylon’s princes, then shall this city
“be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they
“shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of
“their hand. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jere-
“miah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the
“Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and
“they mock me. But Jeremiah said, They shall not de-
“liver thee: obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord,
“which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee,
“and thy soul shall live. But if thou refuse to go forth,
“this is the word that the Lord hath shewed me: And
“behold, all the women that are left in the king of Ju-
“dah’s house, shall be brought forth to the king of Ba-
“bylon’s princes, and those women shall say, Thy
“friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against
“thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are
“turned

“turned away back. So they shall bring out all thy
 “wives and children to the Chaldeans, and thou shalt
 “not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the
 “hand of the king of Babylon : and thou shalt cause
 “this city to be burnt with fire.” (Jer. xxxviii. 14,—
 23.) —Speaking in the language of *Necessity*, God had
 decreed every thing just as it eventually came to pass!
 Of what possible use, then, could promises be? Cer-
 tainly of none. Yet, as addressed to a *Moral Agent*, they
 were highly proper, though that Moral Agent refused to
 embrace them. But, on the ground of necessity, they were
 absurd, ridiculous, and vain, as made to a man that had
 no will of his own, and consequently had no ability to
 choose ; and who could not but act diametrically contrary
 to the advice given. A similar case occurs, mentioned
 Jer. xli. 1, 7, 12. where the people that were left after
 the destruction of Jerusalem, came to the prophet, to en-
 quire of the Lord, what they should do for their own
 safety. —The Lord counselled them to continue in the
 land, and promised them protection ; but they rejected
 the word of the Lord, by the mouth of the prophet. —
 Let me now ask, how these promises operated, as means,
 or causes, in the universal scheme of *Necessity*, on the sup-
 position, that their disobedience was predetermined? —
 They could not act as a means to make them disobey ;
 and, therefore, if they had any influence at all upon the
 conduct of the people, that influence must be directly
 opposed

opposed to the designs of providence : — But, is it reasonable to imagine, that the Divine Being will do that which is calculated to counteract his own designs? Certainly it is not : and I, therefore, infer, that conditional promises made to mankind, contain in them, indubitable evidence of the doctrine of *Moral Agency* ; and tend to prove, that mankind are not in a state of *absolute Moral Necessity*, to do wickedly, arising from an external agency, which they are not able to resist ; but that they are free to act for themselves, as rational beings, who are accountable to God for the abuse of their liberty.

V. THE Lord has, on various occasions, adopted measures to prove mankind, whether they would be obedient to his revealed will : and this circumstance produces no inconsiderable argument, to prove the doctrine of *Moral Agency*. When the Lord brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, into the wilderness of *Sin*, where there was no provision of bread-corn, the people murmured against Moses and Aaron. “ Then said the Lord unto Moses, “ Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you ; and “ the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every “ day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk “ in my law, or no.” &c. (Exod. xvi. 4.) — After the death of Joshua, and the Elders of the people, the Israelites corrupted themselves, by following after the idols of the nations. — “ And the anger of the Lord was hot “ against

“ against Israel, and he said, Because that this people
“ hath transgressed my covenant, which I commanded
“ their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice :
“ I also will not henceforth drive out any from before
“ them, of the nations which Joshua left when he died :
“ that [through them I may prove Israel, whether they
“ will keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein, as their
“ fathers did keep it, or not.” (Judg. ii. 20, 21, 22.) —

The extraordinary circumstances which attended the Israelites in the wilderness, were meant to prove them, as Moses testified unto them, saying, “ And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee
“ these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee,
“ and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart,
“ whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.” (Deut. viii. 2, 16.) — It is also said, “ that God tempted, (or proved) Abraham.” (Gen. xxii. 1.)

THE Lord made the people of Israel to depend, sensibly, upon himself, by giving them bread from heaven every morning, sufficient for the present day; and by continuing hostile nations amongst them, who should watch every opportunity to harass and destroy them.— Their daily support and defence, entirely depended on the sovereign will of God; and they might have known it to have been so.—These circumstances must have been strong incentives to obedience, since they knew, that by

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displeasing

displeasing the Divine Being, they forfeited their every claim to his supporting hand.—Yet it appears from their history, that these motives were not sufficient to restrain them from transgressing his equitable laws.—Upon the supposition, that they had been *machines*, or in a state of *absolute moral Necessity*, and under the direction of an immutable foreign agency, what end, could proving them have answered, since there was not any thing to prove? How would it have comported with the wisdom of the Deity, to have put them to any trial; when under such circumstances, they could not have been deemed fit subjects of it; and all the trial that could be made, was only, whether the governing, directing agency, was sufficient to carry the purposes of the Deity, into effect or not. Proving Abraham and the Israelites, therefore, clearly evinces, that mankind are Moral Agents, and under no Necessity to do any evil, but that which arises from the depravity of their own natures. Abraham was a good man, and when proved, he obeyed the commandment of God. The Israelites in general were wicked, and when tried, they rebelled against God. The trial, in the former instance, proved the genuine piety, of that justly celebrated Patriarch. In the latter instance, it manifested the rebellion and perverseness of the Israelites.—And in both these is evidently discovered the truth of the doctrine of *Moral Agency*.

THE manifest tendency of these trials, were directly opposite.—That of Abraham's, had an apparent tendency to make him disobey, and was well calculated to shew the strength of his faith, and his steadfast attachment to the Deity. That of the Israelites, was calculated to excite to obedience, and therefore well adapted to shew the rebellion of their hearts.—But, on the supposition of a foreign agency, secretly directing the conduct of each party, the trials made, must have failed to discover, either the piety of the former, or the wickedness of the latter: and, in both instances, to have answered no other purpose, but that of deceiving mankind.

VI. THE scripture doctrine of atonement, or the doctrine of redemption and salvation, by the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, furnishes another presumptive argument, in favour of Moral Agency.—Only take it for granted, that we have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. i. 14. Eph. i. 7.) —That Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. (Gal. iii. 13.) — That the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John i. 7.) That without shedding of blood, there is no remission. (Heb. ix. 22.)—That there is salvation in no other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved, but that of Jesus. (Acts iv. 12.) And, that God hath highly exalted him with his

own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. (Acts v. 31.) —And it evidently appears, that mankind are sinners, under the curse of a broken law; and, as such, amenable to the Justice of God. This cannot be the case with any but *Moral Agents*, whose actions are properly their own; for those beings who are in a state of *Necessity*, cannot be under any *moral obligations*, having no will of their own, nor any ability to direct their own actions, being directed in every movement by a foreign agency, which they have no power to resist; and, therefore, not justly chargeable with any crime. If they be not justly chargeable with any crime, they have no guilt to be atoned for; and, however the Lord Jesus Christ might shed his blood to make an atonement for the sins of men, we may rest assured, that he has made no atonement for those who are in a state of *Necessity*; for such could not stand in any need of his kind offices. Those, therefore, who have pleaded the cause of *Necessity*, in the most consistent manner, have not scrupled to deny the proper atonement made by the ever adorable Redeemer; well knowing, that if the doctrine of atonement be true, the doctrine of *absolute Moral*, or *Philosophical Necessity*, must be false. But the doctrine of atonement is true, and stands recorded in the volume of divine inspiration, as a bulwark to defend the doctrine of *Moral Agency*, against all those who attempt to plead the cause of *Necessity*.

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THIS doctrine, so conspicuous in the sacred writings both of the old and new Testament, furnishes a striking proof of the truth of *Moral Agency*, and *Moral Government*, and perfectly corresponds with the giving of laws to rational Beings, with the exhortation of them to render obedience to those laws, with threatening them, in case of disobedience, with encouraging them by promises, and with adopting measures to prove or try them, whether they will submit to the divine Government. By all these methods, the Divine Being convinces men that they are sinners, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and induces them to seek after the remission of their sins. And, that they might not be disappointed in their application to him for mercy, and so sink into black despair, he has appointed his own Son to the office of a Mediator, to make satisfaction to law and justice for the injuries they have done. And now, there is forgiveness with him that he might be feared, or served by mankind, in this imperfect state on earth; having also opened a way into the heavenly world, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, that he might be perfectly obeyed by mankind, in that happy state, to the glory of all his moral perfections.

If the Lord Jesus Christ has made an atonement for the sins of men, this proves them to have been guilty; if they were guilty of sinning against God, this proves them to have been transgressors of his holy and righteous laws; if they were transgressors of his law, this proves them to

have acted for themselves, and not under the directing impulsive agency of another; for he that is impelled by another, not having the direction of his own conduct, cannot properly be said to transgress any law, because his actions are not properly his own, and therefore, he is not amenable to the law. If they acted for themselves, and their actions were properly their own, then they were *Moral Agents*, they were not in a state of *Necessity*; for he who is in that state, is not suffered to act for himself, neither are his actions properly his own; therefore, he cannot be guilty in the eye of impartial justice, and as such, he is in no want of atonement: for atonement proves guilt, and that proves *Moral Agency*.

S E C T. II.

Evidences of Moral Agency, deduced from certain Passages of holy Inspiration.

THAT God deals with men as *Moral Agents*, and not as creatures in a state of *absolute Necessity*, is evident from the following passages:

GEN. vi. 3. *And the LORD said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. My spirit shall not always contend, litigate, or reason with man, to convince him of the impropriety of his conduct, by external means, providences, and ministers, sent to reprove him, and particularly by Noah, a preacher of righteousness;*

because he is mortal, or corrupt and depraved in nature, or bent on the pursuit of fleshly enjoyments. Yet I will wait an hundred and twenty years, before I execute my fierce indignation upon him, giving him time to repent of his wickedness.—This is the *long suffering of God, that waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing.* (1. Pet. iii. 18. 19. 20.) This declaration evidently suggests, that the Spirit of God had strove with the people of the old world, and would still continue to strive with them, for an hundred and twenty years longer, by the use of external means, to convince their consciences of the evil of their ways, and the awful consequences of going on in their trespasses. But they would not repent; neither regarded his threatenings. And I conceive, that in this sense, man may resist the Holy Ghost, by neglecting to take notice of those admonitions, which he gives to mankind by the use of means, and through the medium of his inspired word. With this crime the proto Martyr Stephen, charged the Jews, saying, *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.* (Acts vii. 51.)

ADMITTING, that the spirit of God strives with men, in the use of external means, and instruments, such as his providences, and the ministration of his word, which may be fully proved, from a great variety of arguments drawn from incontrovertible facts, then it is evident, that

God deals with men as Moral Agents, and not as if in a state of Necessity. He does not ordinarily put forth his agency to direct their course, and impel them to go on in it; but makes use of laws, threatenings, providences, and moral suasion, well adapted to moral agents, left to the freedom of their own will. Even regeneration, does not supercede this mode of government: for when mens hearts are changed, renovated, and sanctified, they then *choose* to obey the will of their gracious Redeemer, without an impulsive agency. Our Lord says, "Make the tree good and his fruit good."—(Mat. xii. 23.) "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit."—(Mat. vii. 17.)—Nothing more seems necessary to enable a man to perform extraordinary acts of obedience, than an increase of that holy principle imparted in regeneration. And this appears to be the way by which the Lord usually works, when he strengthens his people for accumulated trials, or important services. This, therefore, is a mode of government, diametrically opposite to every idea, of *absolute, Moral, or Physical Necessity*. The necessity of men's actions, depend then on their natures—their natures are mutable—and therefore the necessity must also be mutable.—If men's natures were like brass and iron, and their form mechanism, resembling that of a good time piece, then might their actions be uniform and certain. But, as it can never be determined, whether an irregular horologe will go faster or slower than it ought, for a given period;

period ; so, neither can we ascertain, whether a depraved fallible being, will act with any kind of regularity in those ways to which he is inclined by his own nature, whether he will commit sin with greater or lesser diligence ; for as he is mutable, and has the principle of action in himself, and does not depend on the circumstances that surround him, having, (as we may say,) *a will of his own*, and capable of acting contrary to the design of every good motive, and against every remonstrance of reason and conscience, when bent upon gratifying a vicious inclination ; it must be altogether uncertain, how far that inclination will carry him.

BUT, to return to the point : If the spirit strive with men, by the use of common means, to excite them to obedience, when the universal scheme of Providence has designed their disobedience, it appears, that the Spirit of God strives against the designs of Providence ; and, in that case, the Divine Being would be divided against himself ! But, as this would be totally inconsistent with infinite Wisdom, so it would ill accord with that sincerity, with which, we may well suppose, the Lord of the universe, deals with his rational creatures. For his operations, as *Moral Governor*, checking men's consciences by the ministry of his word, &c. must either be insincere and unmeaning, and so mere matter of delusion ; or else they must be really intended for the benefit of mankind, and so calculated to promote their good, if they were disposed

to

to hearken. As no reason can be assigned, why the Deity should counteract his own intentions, or deal insincerely with mankind, while applying the means for their reformation, we are obliged to conclude, that his conduct, in these ways, is both wise and gracious, exactly corresponding with his character as *Moral Governor*, and with the situation of his rational creatures, as *Moral Agents*, left to the freedom of their own will. The passage of holy writ which we have cited above, from Gen. vi. 3. is, therefore, decidedly in favour of *Moral Agency*, and in direct opposition to *absolute Moral Necessity*.

So is the language of Moses, the servant of the Lord, addressed to the people of Israel, Deut. iv. 1,—6, 9.

“ Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes,
 “ and unto the judgments which I teach you, for to do
 “ them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land
 “ which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye
 “ shall not add unto the word which I command you,
 “ neither shall you diminish *ought* from it, that you may
 “ keep the commandments of the LORD your God, which
 “ I command you. Your eyes have seen what the LORD
 “ did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed
 “ Baal-peor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them
 “ from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the
 “ LORD your God, *are* alive every one of you this day.
 “ Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even
 “ at

“ as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should
 “ do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep,
 “ therefore, and do *them*, for this is your wisdom and
 “ your understanding, in the sight of the nations, which
 “ shall hear all these statutes, and say, surely this great
 “ nation is a wise and understanding people.—Only take
 “ heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou
 “ forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest
 “ they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but
 “ teach them thy sons, and thy sons sons.”—Only take
 away the doctrine of a *self-moving agency*, and establish
 the doctrine of *absolute necessity*, and where is the propriety
 of this very seasonable admonition? Or what wisdom and
 understanding would it have discovered in that people,
 to have conformed their lives to the statutes of the LORD
 their God?—It was in vain for Moses to warn the people,
 not to tempt the LORD their God, as they tempted him
 in Massah, and to urge them to a diligent observance of
 his commandments, and to do that which was right in
 his sight; if they had no ability to act of themselves; or,
 in the language of Mr. Edwards, *if the soul of man has no in-
 fluence, no hand in the diversity of the effect; and that the
 difference of the effect cannot be owing to any thing in the
 soul;—*for he must have known, that his exhortations
 were vain: but, as one that confidently believed in the
 doctrine of *Moral Agency*, he says, “ Ye shall not tempt
 “ the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.
 “ You

“ You shall diligently keep the commandments of the
“ LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes
“ which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do
“ that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD :
“ that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go
“ in, and possess the good land which the LORD sware
“ unto thy fathers ; to cast out all thine enemies from
“ before thee, as the LORD hath spoken.” (Deut. vi. 19.)
Moses, not only considered the people as *self-moving Agents*, but their rulers and kings also, as possessing the same power, and, therefore, gave the following very salutary instructions to him who should be appointed by the LORD to rule over them : “ When thou art come in-
“ to the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and
“ shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say,
“ I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that
“ are about me. Thou shalt in any wise set him king
“ over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose : one
“ from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee :
“ thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not
“ thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to him-
“ self, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the
“ end that he should multiply horses : forasmuch as the
“ LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return
“ no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives
“ to himself, that his heart turn not away : neither shall
“ he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. And it
“ shall

“ shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his king-
“ dom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a
“ book, out of that which is before the priests the Le-
“ vites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read
“ therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to
“ fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this
“ law, and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be
“ not lifted up above his brethen, and that he turn not
“ aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to
“ the left: to the end he may prolong his days in the
“ kingdom; he, and his children in the midst of Israel.”
(Deut. xvii. 14,—20.)

SOLOMON considered the people of Israel in the light of *Moral Agents*, in his address to them at the dedication of the Temple, when he said, “ Let your heart therefore
“ be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his sta-
“ tutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.”
(1 Kings viii. 61.) — The Divine Being treated Jeroboam as a self-moving Agent, when he vested him with kingly authority over the *Ten Tribes of Israel*, saying, “ And I
“ will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all
“ that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel.
“ And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I
“ command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do *that*
“ *is* right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my com-
“ mandments, as David my servant did; that I will be
“ with

“with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee.” (1 Kings xi. 37,—38.)

PERFECTLY agreeable to our idea of a self-moving principle in man, are those striking words, “Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” (Prov. i. 24,—31.) — On any other principle, why should men be condemned for refusing to hear the instructions of wisdom? And what propriety would there be in the Deity’s *laughing* at their calamity, if they had not wilfully and perversely turned a deaf ear to his admonitions? It would be cruel to laugh at the sufferings of one, who was unavoidably drawn into them by absolute necessity.

It should seem that there were some Necessarians, both in principle and practice, in the days of the prophets, and the Lord inspired his servants to contradict their absurd notions, (embraced, most likely, to silence the accusing voice of conscience, while practising vice and immorality) by shewing that he had done, every thing which he had done, with a view to excite them to obedience, and to promote their happiness and interest, saying, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes, And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you betwixt me and my vine yard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? (Isa. v. 1,—4.)—He therefore challenges them, saying, "Behold ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense into Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not: And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations?" (Jer. vii. 8,—10.)—But, if *Necessarianism* be true, it must have

have been even so. Yet, as they were *Moral Agents*, the LORD was not wanting to use the means for exciting them to walk in his commandments; for he sent his prophets to reprove and instruct them, as it is written, “ And the
“ LORD hath sent unto you all his servants, the prophets,
“ rising early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. They said,
“ Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and
“ from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land
“ that the LORD hath given unto you, and to your fathers for ever and ever: And go not after other Gods
“ to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me
“ not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will
“ do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me,
“ saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger
“ with the works of your hands, to your own hurt.” (Jer. xxv. 4.—7.)—Jeremiah, was particularly commissioned for this purpose, by the divine Being, who said unto him,
“ Thus saith the LORD, stand in the court of the LORD’s
“ house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which
“ come to worship in the LORD’s house, all the words that
“ I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a
“ word. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man
“ from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil
“ which I purpose to do unto them, because of the evil
“ of their doings. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus
“ saith the LORD, If ye will not hearken to me, to walk
“ in

“ in my law, which I have set before you, to hearken
“ to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent
“ unto you, both rising up early, and sending them (but
“ ye have not hearkened) Then will I make this house
“ like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the
“ nations of the earth.” (Jer. xxvi. 2,—6.)—And again,
“ Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will send upon
“ them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will
“ make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are
“ so evil. And I will persecute them with the sword,
“ with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will de-
“ liver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the
“ earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an his-
“ ing, and a reproach among all the nations, whither I
“ have driven them : because they have not hearkened
“ to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them
“ by my servants the prophets, rising up early, and send-
“ them, but ye would not hear saith the LORD.” (ibid,
xxix. 17,—19.)—The Deity reasoned with the people of
Israel, after the following manner, by his servant, the
prophet Ezekiel, to convince them of their error, in as-
cribing their destruction to His sovereign will, and not to
their own sinful conduct ; which mode of reasoning ex-
actly corresponds with the doctrine of Moral Agency. He
says, “ Yet say ye, Why? Doth not the son bear the in-
“ iquity of the father? When the son hath done that
“ which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my sta-
“ tutes,

“ tutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The
“ foul that sinneth, it shall die : the son shall not bear
“ the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear
“ the iniquity of the son ; the righteousness of the right-
“ teous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the
“ wicked shall be upon him, But if the wicked will
“ turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep
“ all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right,
“ he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his trans-
“ gressions that he hath committed, they shall not be
“ mentioned unto him : in his righteousness that he hath
“ done, he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that
“ the wicked should die? saith the Lord God : and not
“ that he should return from his ways, and live? But
“ when the righteous turneth away from his righteous-
“ ness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to
“ all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall
“ he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall
“ not be mentioned : in his trespass that he hath tres-
“ passed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall
“ he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal.
“ Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal?
“ Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man
“ turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth
“ iniquity, and dieth in them ; for his iniquity that he
“ hath done, shall he die. Again, when the wicked man
“ turneth away from his wickedness that he hath com-
“ mitted,

“mitted, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he
“shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and
“turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath
“committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet
“saith the house of Israel, The way of the LORD is not
“equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal?
“Are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge
“you, O house of Israel, every one according to his
“ways, saith the LORD GOD: repent, and turn your-
“selves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not
“be your ruin.” (Ezek. xviii. 19,—30.)—In this pas-
sage, the Lord clearly asserts the equity of his own pro-
ceedings, that every man shall be answerable for his own
sins only, and that whoever, under the influence of a
gracious principle, turns from the error of his ways, shall
find mercy with him.

THE doctrine of Moral Agency appears conspicuous
in that admirable exclamation in Hosea, “O Ephraim,
“what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do
“unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud,
“and as the early dew it goeth away. Therefore have I
“hewed them by the prophets: I have slain them by
“the words of my mouth, and thy judgments are as the
“light that goeth forth. For I desired mercy, and not
“sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-
“offerings. But they like men have transgressed the

“covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.” (Hos. vi. 4,—7.)—Had the Divine Being known them to have been in a state of philosophical necessity, he might have saved himself the pains, of absurdly labouring with them, to bring about that, which had been otherwise infallibly settled from the beginning; but his using the means of instruction, reproof, and correction, shews, that he treated them as *Moral Agents*, and not as *Necessarians*. And should any object, that his foreseeing their rejection of his word, renders his using the means equally absurd; it will be sufficient to answer, that God has not made his foreknowledge, the rule by which he has conducted himself towards his creatures, treating them constantly as *Moral Agents*, and as answerable for the ill use they make of his instructions, warnings, or reproofs. Therefore, our Lord declared to the unbelieving Jews, That it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment, than for those who had been favoured with his doctrine and miracles, and yet remained in unbelief. But, if *Necessarianism* be true, which way could it be more tolerable for one than for another? For neither of them had any ability to have acted otherwise than as they did; and, therefore, neither of them deserving of praise or blame: their being blamed and punished in an higher degree, must arise from the doctrine of *Moral Agency*, and that only. When the Saviour wept over Jerusalem, saying, “O Jerusalem, Je-

“ rusalem,

“ rusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them
 “ that are sent unto thee: how often would I have ga-
 “ thered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her
 “ brood under her wings, and ye would not!” (Luke
 xiii. 34.)—He must have considered the people under
 the idea of *Moral Agents*. Nor need we go into the Ar-
 minian notion, of man’s being able to give himself a new
 nature, or of his being capable of acting above himself:
 for the sacred Scriptures have set that matter in the clearest
 light, so that we must wilfully shut our eyes, not to see
 it to be a thing impossible. “ Can the Ethiopian change
 “ his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also
 “ do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” (Jer. xiii.
 23.)—“ For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit :
 “ neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”
 (Luke vi. 43.)—The meaning of our Lord, in this pas-
 sage, appears to have been this, that he had used the
 means, even every means that was proper, for restraining
 their wicked practices, and to influence them to do that
 which was right ; but, as they were *Moral Agents*, and
 neither in a state of *Necessity*, nor to be moved mechani-
 cally, they would not comply with the exhortations given
 them, but wilfully rejected the counsel of God against
 themselves, till wrath came upon them, even to the ut-
 termost: and the compassionate Redeemer, while he fore-
 saw, wept over their awful destruction. As a *Moral*
Agent, “ He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ;

“and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do
 “justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with
 “thy God?” (Micah vi. 8.)

THE Divine Being addressed the Jews as *Moral Agents*,
 (Zech. vii. 9,—13.) “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts,
 “saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and
 “compassion, every man to his brother. And oppress
 “not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the
 “poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his bro-
 “ther in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and
 “pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that
 “they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as
 “an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and
 “the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spi-
 “rit by the former prophets; therefore came a great
 “wrath from the LORD of hosts. Therefore it is come to
 “pass, that, as he cried, and they would not hear; so
 “they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of
 “hosts.”——And again, (Mal. iii. 7.) “Even from the
 “days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine or-
 “dinances, and have not kept them: return unto me,
 “and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts:
 “but ye said, Wherein shall we return?”——Under the
 same idea, the Son of God addressed himself to his fol-
 lowers, in the days of his flesh, saying, “Watch ye
 “therefore (for ye know not when the master of the
 “house

“house cometh; at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning)” (Mark xiii. 35.) — Under the idea of Moral Agents, Paul the Apostle, addressed the Corinthian Converts to Christianity, saying, “Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things: now, they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.” (1 Cor. ix. 24, 25.) — And the Apostle Peter, when he wrote his second general Epistle to the scattered followers of Christ, must have considered them as Moral Agents, and not as in a state of Necessity, while he warmly exhorted them, saying, “Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.” (2 Pet. i. 5,—7.) — But were I to introduce all the passages that might be quoted from the sacred Scriptures, in favour of Moral Agency, I should be under the necessity of transcribing a great part of the old and new testament; for they all speak the same language.

P A R T VI.

*Strictures on Dr. PRIESTLEY's Correspondence
with Dr. PRICE, on the Subject of Philo-
sophical Necessity.*

SINCE I finished my Thoughts on Moral Govern-
ment and Moral Agency, at the request of an intel-
ligent Friend, who well understood the subject, I pro-
cured the Correspondence, with a view to know what
had been said on this topic, by two such eminent Cha-
racters in the literary world. — Of course, I read it with
high expectations, not knowing, but that the matter con-
tained therein, might supercede the necessity, or pro-
priety of publishing my Thoughts on this contested
point; which, to me, would have been a pleasing cir-
cumstance.—Upon an attentive perusal of the Correspondence,

dence, it appeared to me, that Dr. Price had advanced more solid argument, than his opponent Dr. Priestley: though the latter has so contrived it, as to have the Reply at every turn; and, by this means, he has left the last impression on the reader's mind.——The Dispute, throughout, is conducted with great moderation; and, on Dr. Price's part, with too much deference, I think, to the abilities of his opponent; in consequence of which, the cause of Moral Agency has suffered considerable injury: and, especially, from the narrowness of the ground, on which the subject is taken up; which, in a great measure, must have been owing, in my apprehension, to the subject's being discussed by way of Epistolary Correspondence: for I cannot but suppose, that if Dr. Price had expressed his thoughts on this subject at large, without the trammels of controversy, he would have produced much stronger arguments, than he has done; for the Correspondence naturally tended to limit his views of the subject in dispute, by directing his attention to particular points, and such, as did not lead him to bring forward the prime Evidences, in favour of Moral Agency.

As there are some matters advanced by Dr. Priestley, in this Dispute, to which, in the preceding Essays, I have not paid any particular attention; have, therefore, thought proper to subjoin some Remarks, on a few passages,

fages, which I sketched over while reading the Correspondence, with a view to combat some of the Doctor's Positions, which appeared, to me, the most likely to mislead, or bewilder the unwary reader; being, very frequently, little more than bold assertions, unaccompanied with that kind of Evidence, which is necessary to substantiate them.

IN page 137, Dr. Priestley says, "That which we should avoid, is making the reasons and ends in acting the *physical causes* or *efficients* in action. The same as ascribing the action of walking to the eye, and not to the feet." If I mistake not the Doctor here, by *physical cause*, he intends the *natural*, or *real* cause of action. This he considers, as existing in external objects, or motives, or in the great chain of causes and effects, as he expresses himself elsewhere, and neither in the Moral Agent, nor in his reasons and ends for acting: which at once strikes at the very root of *Moral Government* and *Agency*: for, upon his hypothesis, there can be neither of these, in the sense in which we have explained them. And, if man's reason and end in acting, be not the efficient cause of his actions, he does not act from himself: and, properly speaking, his actions are not his own. I cannot, therefore, perceive any reason, why we should carefully avoid making the reasons and ends in acting, the *physical causes*, or *efficients* in action, except it be in pure complaisance

to

to his scheme of Philosophical Necessity. For what else but these, can be deemed the efficient causes of action, with a *Moral free Agent*, who has the principle that determines him to act in himself, and not in another?

It appears a little extraordinary, that Dr. Priestley should insinuate, that there are no Evidences of a *self-moving power* in man. He says, "A power manifested by no effects, must be considered as merely imaginary." (p. 147.) When, it must be obvious to all, I. That this power is as inseparably connected with *the Vital Principle*, as light and heat, are inseparably connected with the beams of the sun. *A Vital Principle* cannot exist without it; for what is life in animals, but the power of moving themselves? All animals have this power, from the slowest moving reptile, to the swiftest winged inhabitant of the air. That being which cannot move itself, must be destitute of animal life. If animals cannot move of themselves, without the help of a *foreign agency*, as Dr. Priestley suggests, wherein do they differ from machines? And if they be only machines, they have, consequently, no claim to life. But if animals, possessing the vital principle, be capable of self-motion, how much more man, whose superior mind, has greater ability to exercise the organs of sense, for the purpose of acquiring knowledge?

II. This *self-moving power*, is manifested in the ability

lity of the human mind to apprehend present objects, through the medium of the organs of sense. This cannot, altogether, be attributed to the objects themselves: because, when it is difficult for the soul clearly to perceive an object, through the medium of the senses, the sensitive faculties, as well as the mind, more powerfully exert themselves to obtain a just apprehension: the ear expands itself, the pupil of the eye dilates, and the mind closely attends. And to what else can we ascribe this mutual exertion of the powers of the body, and the faculties of the mind, but to a self-moving power?—Suppose the mind to be absorbed in deep contemplation, what is the action, then, of external objects, upon the sentient faculties? The soft melodious notes, to which we were all ear in the other state, and the obscure faint appearance of those beautiful colours, which, nicely to distinguish, we exerted every power of vision, are now both alike unattended to, and make no impression on the sensitive organs. The senses are engaged, and not to be spoken with. This shews, that we possess an inherent self-moving power.

III. THE power of reflecting, or reproducing objects in the mind, at pleasure, with all their native charms, or terrific forms, strikingly evinces a self-moving power in man. The impassioned lover, recollects the beautiful object of his choice, dressed in all her attractions, though oceans roll between them, as if she was really present.—

The

The enfeebled nerves of the hypochondriac tremble, while, during the wakeful hours of night, the mind is reproducing, either the dreadful gulph, the brink of some tremendous precipice, or the slippery summit of some cloud-capt mountain, though he himself be safely resting on a bed of down! But to what cause can this be referred? Or, to what can we ascribe this action of the mind, if there be no self-moving power in man? Which power, having raised a tempest in the human frame, too great to be long supported, directs the mind to the contemplation of more pleasing objects, and, thereby, restores tranquility to the irritated system.

IV. *THE power of contemplation*, or, of extending our thoughts to subjects, the very idea of which, does not present itself to the *sentient* principle of any of those beings which surround us, although, endowed with the organs of sense, in many instances, far beyond the human race, is a further *evidence* of a self-moving power in man. Man is capable of contemplating invisible objects; such as the Divine Being, angels, and fallen spirits,—of diving into the Arcana of nature,—of exploring the latent properties of matter,—and of discovering the real motions of the heavenly bodies, in contradiction to their apparent motions.—And to what else, but to this self-moving power, are we indebted for all the discoveries, and improvements, which have been made in arts and science;—in Astronomy,

my, Electricity, experimental Philosophy, Mathematics, Physics, Metaphysics, &c. &c?

V. To what else can we attribute all the *diversity of sentiment*, in the moral world, but to this self-moving power, while the ground of information is the same?—For, is it not reasonable to conclude, that, if men were mechanically moved, like machines, by *an external divine revelation*, in all their reflections, in forming judgments, and in adopting notions, moral and religious, then, an uniformity of sentiment would prevail among men; (so far as their minds should proceed, to investigate divine immutable truth, and in proportion to the strength of their faculties, to perceive that truth) the motive power being the same, with respect to all those who enjoy *a divine revelation*. But the wisest of men, with the same revelation in their hands, received as the only certain rule of faith, have formed very different, and, sometimes, almost opposite sentiments, from the same source of intelligence; which clearly demonstrates a self-moving power in man.—Machines, constructed on the same principle, and moved by the same motive power, must have an uniform motion: For, admitting that one of those machines should be defective, in the teeth or cogs of some of its wheels, that circumstance might retard, but could not change the nature of its motion; for if it moved at all, it would move in unison with the rest, having no disposition to move otherwise: that disposition would prove self-

self-motion, the principle, into which we must resolve all the irregularities found in the moral world.

VI. *Desire of objects not present*, is a further evidence of a self-moving power in man. It must greatly puzzle the Philosopher, to say what it is, that excites the mind to desire an object that is not sensibly present, if this power be excluded.—He may assert, that want excites desire. And what is want, but the expression of a self-moving power? Where this power is not, every creature must remain in a state of rest, if no other being set it into motion. If the object desired, be absent, where is the Agent that actuates the mind? For the wished for object, cannot act upon the senses, unless it were present. To alledge its having been present, at some former time, proves the power of the soul to reproduce objects, which we have shewn to be an effect of *self-moving power*.

VII. THE *natural cravings* of mere animal nature, after food, and going in quest of it, is an evidence of this power in animals: and, therefore, the insatiable thirst of the human mind, after rational pleasures, and mental enjoyments, must exhibit a more sublime proof of the existence of this power in the human species.

VIII. *Devising reasons and motives to action*, when no occasion offers itself, nor any necessity impels, but such as
arise

arise from the activity of man's nature, and an aversion to be at rest, may be considered as another proof of this self-moving power. A Being devoid of this power, can do no other than rest, except it be acted upon by some other agent, for there can be no disposition to motion, without a proper excitement.—There may be a few singular characters so torpid, as not to wish for exercise; but this is not the case with the generality of mankind, who for the most part find themselves unhappy in a state of inaction; therefore, those who are not educated to useful employments, are under the disagreeable necessity, (as self-moving agents) of devising ways and means for exercising themselves, though that exercise be of the most trifling, or unprofitable nature, rather than feel themselves unhappy. But how can rest be disgusting to any one, but a self-moving agent? Infelicity itself will be found to be another effect of self-motion. Let me, therefore, ask the Necessarian what it is distinct, and separate from a man's self, that puts him upon devising expedients or inducements to action, when no external motive is present? For under such circumstances, he must either have a self-acting principle, or continue at rest, till some motive comes in contact with the sentient faculties. But every man's experience informs him, that he can contrive employments, or ways to exercise himself, when he is in a state of rest, if he can ever be deemed in such a state, which is a striking evidence of a self-moving power in man.

IX. *The ability of man*, in the full possession of his intellectual faculties, *to bend his attention to any subject*, or *to stop a train of thought at pleasure*, however agreeable to the sentient faculty, clearly evinces a self-moving principle. every man is conscious, in himself, that he can turn his thoughts to any subject; and, though surrounded with ten thousand objects, which present themselves to the senses, yet he can decline contemplating any one of them, and fix upon a subject quite foreign, and totally unconnected with any thing presented to his view. Were not this the case, in what an awkward and distressed situation, would the polemical disputant, the poet, and the indigent Author find themselves, when requested to exercise their talents on some particular subjects! Suppose that the disputant was desired to write a defence of Socinianism, and he could recollect no arguments but those in support of Calvinism, :—or, if the poet were to be employed to write a poem on the Creation, and his thoughts should be invincibly fixed on the universal conflagration :—or if the necessitous Author had pledged himself, to give a dissertation on Chymistry, and botanical ideas only recurred to his mind! How would each of them be confounded, at the suspension of their recollective powers! If a man cannot exercise his thoughts, on whatever theme he thinks proper: if he cannot command images, and striking forms of expression, at pleasure, to adorn his subject, we may naturally suppose, that Shakespear, Milton,

Thompson, and Young, were inspired, when penning their original and sublime productions ; for to what else can we attribute those beautiful images, if we deny them this power.

WITHOUT this ability of turning the attention of the mind to any subject at pleasure, and of repressing the fallies of imagination, the business of life could not be conducted with any degree of expedition and dexterity : there would be no expedition in trade : there would be no transition from one thing to another, nothing of that ready dispatch of business, which we observe in the shops and counting-houses of eminent Tradesmen, and Merchants, of every commercial town and city throughout the world. Men would be held, so long, by the fascinating influences of the present object, that they would not, without great difficulty, be able to disengage themselves, to converse with another object, or engage in another employment.—What an awkward figure would a shop-man cut, if, when he had dispatched one piece of business, he was to remain *in statu quo* till another should come forward, and bespeak his attention. But having this self-moving power, men find themselves perfectly disengaged, and at full liberty to perform whatever business may be the most necessary and urgent.

“ It is on the influence of motives on the will that
“ the

“the whole of moral government depends,”—p. 148. I conceive, that by moral government here, the Doctor intends that authority, and governing power and agency, by which the Divine Being is supposed to direct the conduct of his intelligent creatures; and that his meaning in this sentence is, that moral government has no effect on the will of the Moral Agent, further than the influence of motives; and that, where these fail, the influence of moral government fails also.—If this explanation of the sentence be right, it appears to me, perfectly consistent with our ideas of moral government, as a government by law, and not by agency; intended to direct men to the practice of virtue and piety, but not to compel them: to warn them of the danger of sinning against God, but not effectually to hinder, or prevent them. This observation, therefore, makes against the Doctor’s Scheme of Necessity, and is in favour of Moral Agency. But, should I have mistaken his sense, and his intention was to say, that God infallibly directs the conduct of his rational creatures, by the influence of motives on the will; then it becomes us to enquire after moral motives, what they are: for, we may safely conclude, that moral government is carried on by moral motives, and not by any other. Moral motives, must be such motives as have a tendency to influence men, to render obedience to the law of God; such as promises and threatenings, the doctrine of rewards and punishments, the revelation of a fu-

ture state of happiness for the righteous, and of punishment for the wicked. *On the influence of these motives on the will*, says the Doctor, *the whole of moral government depends*. But, pray, what government does the Doctor call that, which has conducted mankind through all the horrid scenes of wickedness, delineated in the historic page? He will scarcely call that moral government, or attribute those dreadful outrages to the influence of moral motives? Yet, how will he avoid doing so, consistently, with his scheme of Philosophical Necessity? At the same time, it must appear an extraordinary mode of reasoning, to attribute sinful actions and events, to the certain influence of moral motives on the will! But, if the Deity direct all the actions of men, (in the exercise of his moral government over mankind) by the influence of motives on the will, then it must be so; or else he must make use of other motives, which are not moral; which would change the nature of his government from moral to immoral. For, if God should exercise his governing power over mankind, for the purposes of securing the certainty of sinful actions and events, what could we call it else, but an immoral government? Its tendency and influence being directed to immoral purposes. And, therefore, the term moral, on the Doctor's hypothesis, but ill applies to that government, which, as he supposes, God exercises over mankind; and by which he directs

directs them to walk in the ways of sin; as it answers no moral purpose whatsoever.

BUT, should the Doctor mean to say, That the human mind is so constructed, as to be certainly and invariably affected by external motives, and that the one is so exactly suited to the other, and connected together, like wheels in a machine, that the mind is inevitably influenced by motives, to choose such a particular line of conduct, and cannot do otherwise, and that the whole of moral government depends upon this; which is the same thing as saying, God directs the conduct of men by the influence of motives, and his government of them depends upon this influence.—Then, I would observe, that the influence of rewards and punishments, which may be called moral motives, depends on the active agency of man to apprehend them,—on self-love, which induces men to seek self-gratification, and self-preservation, (according to the ideas entertained concerning them) — on the nature, inclinations, and habits of the Moral Agent,—and on the degree of credit, which he pays to promises and threatenings; as appears in the seduction of Eve. Hence it follows, that the influences of moral government, are much more uncertain in their effects, than those of government by agency; which fully proves it to be distinct from that, and to be a government not by agency, but by law. Yet it must be by agency, if the

doctrine of Philosophical Necessity be true; for that stands upon this foundation only: which clearly shews Dr. Priestley's hypothesis to be essentially wrong. If the certain operations of moral government depend on the influence of moral motives, and if the operations of that influence depend on the mind's perceiving those motives, and being impressed by them; the mind being mutable, and possessing self-agency, having power to resist motives at pleasure; how can the effects of moral government, be equally certain with the effects of government by agency? It is impossible, in the nature of things, that they should: indeed, the Divine Being never designed them to be of equal certainty; for then he would have secured that certainty, and, if so, sin could not have entered into the world; for we cannot admit, that God would make use of any but moral motives, in carrying on his moral government, and the influence of those motives are uniformly tending to produce obedience: they have failed to do this, both in fallen angels and men, which proves the effects of moral government, not to be equally certain, with the effects of government by agency; and completely destroys the foundation of Philosophical Necessity.

AFTER all that can be said on the subject of moral government, it appears, to me, self-evident, that it depends upon nothing but the sovereign will of the Deity, his giving laws with sanctions, promises and threatenings,
and

and his duly rewarding the obedient, and punishing the transgressor. And they greatly mistake the matter, who attempt to prove, that the evil conduct of sinful beings is directed by, what they call, the laws of moral government, as the conduct of brute animals is directed by the laws of instinct, or the motions of the planetary worlds are directed by the laws of nature. What! shall we suppose, that the Holy and the Just, has constructed certain laws, to infallibly direct men through all the horrid mazes of sin and wickedness, rapine and destruction, with the nicest certainty, and the most scrupulous exactness? God forbid! I am, therefore, warranted to conclude, that moral government does not depend on the influence of motives, and that it is not a government by influence, but by law: and, therefore, depends wholly on the authority of the Moral Governor, and not on the influence of motives; and so long as he maintains his authority, it must stand. The direction of man's conduct, therefore, by the influence of motives, makes no part of a just theory of the human mind: for the Divine Being never designed human nature to be so governed; as may be demonstrated by the following mode of argument:—If the Divine Being infallibly direct the conduct of his intelligent creatures, by the influence of motives, those motives must either have a tendency to good or evil actions, obedience or disobedience. We cannot suppose, that the Divine Being would make use of base motives, motives calculated

to excite to disobedience ; for that would be acting against his nature, and his law ; for nothing can appear more ridiculous or base, in any government, than that of enacting penal statutes, and then contriving ways and means effectually to draw the subjects to transgress :—A government among men, framed on this principle, would be reprobated by every man of common sense ; and shall we attribute any thing of this kind to the Deity ! God cannot, in the nature and fitness of things, direct the conduct of men by the influence of wicked motives : nor can he be concerned in securing their disobedience to his laws : because it is against his nature. — If the Deity make use of moral motives, or motives tending to influence to obedience, which are the only motives we can suppose him capable of using ; the abominably wicked conduct of men would prove, that they are not under the directing influence of moral motives, and that these motives have but small power to direct the conduct of mankind ; or to deter them from sin and wickedness. — But, that God does not direct even the good conduct of men, altogether, by the influence of external motives, may be concluded, from his using the agency of his holy Spirit to change the hearts of men, that they may be disposed to render obedience to his will : for, if he direct the conduct of men by the influence of motives, there could be no necessity for any other agency : which clearly proves, that the direction of rational intelligences, by the
influence

influence of external motives, make no part of a just theory of the human mind.

THE Doctor does not like the terms *accountableness*, *praise* and *blame*, *merit* and *demerit* — (p. 149.) and supposes, that they relate to *Moral discipline*. — They certainly relate to *Moral Agency*, and necessarily imply the power of self-direction: for, where this is denied, there can be no room for moral discipline; for, if the actions of men be wrong, the directing Agent ought to be blamed, and not the subject or instrument of those wrong actions: for he cannot deserve to be made unhappy on that account, any more than the instrument in good actions deserves to be made happy; for desert is out of the question. — But, by allowing the propriety of punishing men for bad actions, the Doctor fully establishes the doctrine of *Moral Agency* against Necessity: for, while he supposes that men are so far self-agents, as to be capable of perceiving the intent of those sufferings, inflicted on them for their misconduct, — of acting a better part in future life, — and of taking warning, from the examples made of other Moral Agents, to avoid splitting on the same rock, he establishes, to all intents and purposes, our idea of *Moral Agency*, against the doctrine of *absolute Necessity*,

DR. PRIESTLEY can see no difference, in point of criminality,

minality, between doing and permitting, (i. e. suffering) a sinful action that may be prevented. — p. 176. Upon the idea of an impulsive agency, directing the actions of men, there may not. But, upon the ideas of Moral Agency and Moral Government, as we have stated them, the difference is great. In the *former case*, it is a wilful doing of that which is wrong. In the *latter*, it is the Moral Governor's acting in character, and with propriety, towards *Moral Agents*, placed in a state of probation, and not to be prevented from doing evil, without a violation of that relation subsisting between the Moral Governor and his creatures, and an immediate change of their state, as probationers. And we might as well blame the civil magistrate, for the irregularities of the people, because he does not keep them in chains, as blame the Deity for the sinful actions of men, because he has not bound them in the trammels of necessity, to prevent their doing wrong.

Thus the great Milton speaks, in the person of the Creator, of Man's Sin and Fall : —

“ ————— If I foreknew,
 “ Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
 “ Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.
 “ So without least impulse, or shadow of fate,
 “ Or ought in Me immutably foreseen,

“ They

“ They trespass ; authors to themselves in all,
 “ Both what they judge, and what they choose ; for so
 “ I form’d them free, and free they must remain,
 “ Till they inthrall themselves ; I else must change
 “ Their nature, and revoke the high decree
 “ Unchangeable, eternal, which ordain’d
 “ Their freedom ; they themselves ordain’d their fall.”

Paradise Lost, Book III. Line 117, &c.

“ I F Dr. Price admits, as, in this place, he seems to
 “ do, that our determinations *certainly* depend upon the
 “ state of our minds, I have no objection to his calling us
 “ *free Agents*. I believe we are so in the popular sense
 “ of the words, and I think it perfectly consistent with all
 “ the *necessity* that I ascribe to man. When men say that
 “ they are *free*, they have no idea of any thing farther than
 “ a freedom from the control of others, or what may be
 “ called *external force*, or causes of action, not arising in
 “ themselves. *Internal causes* are never so much as
 “ thought of, and much less expressly excluded, when they
 “ speak of this most perfect liberty.” p. 177, 178. But,
 what internal causes of action can there be, except those
 which arise from a *self-moving agency*? Supposing then it be
 granted, that external objects and circumstances have an
 influence on the mind, to excite it to action ; as, a man of
 sound intellect, finding himself in such particular circum-
 stances, judges what line of conduct is most eligible for
 him

him to pursue, and from thence resolves to act upon such a plan; but is it arguing fairly, to attribute causality to those circumstances, as Dr Priestley seems to do? Yet, even here, it must be acknowledged, that the Moral Agent may either act, or forbear to act, as appears to him most suitable. Thus two Generals with their armies, opposing each other in the field, and seeking to gain advantages, should one of them make an advantageous movement, we say, that he compels the other to move, in order to counteract his motion, or else he would expose his army to destruction: but may not the other, either from ignorance, or fool-hardiness, refuse to move; or in moving, is it not at his own option, to adopt what kind of evolution, or retreat, he chooses to make?—The rule of duty is laid before men, and they are threatened with destruction, if they refuse to obey: but does this compel them to render obedience? May they not through wilful ignorance, unbelief, or hardness of heart, refuse; though they appear to be in a state of necessity to obey?—Temptations assault men, to draw them aside from the path of duty to their own ruin: and from natural inclination, they are in great danger of complying. Yet, even then, may they not recollect the threatenings of the divine law, and refuse to comply with the temptation, from motives of self-love? And, if they may, where is the omnipotent power of external motives, to secure the certainty of men's actions, and render them, absolutely *necessary*? Does it not appear

appear that there is a self-moving power within, that fits arbiter, and determines all our actions, in opposition to every external object, circumstance and temptation, that may surround us? and in many instances determining contrary to the expectations of a by-stander, and to that which he would judge the *stronger motive*? Which shews that our determinations depend on the state of the mind, and that the causes of action, are *internal causes*, and not owing to any foreign agency, and therefore, not under the laws of Philosophical Necessity.

“IF every determination of the mind of man,
 “ certainly depend upon preceding causes, whether the
 “ causes be moral, or physical, it is not possible that any
 “ determination, or consequently that any event, in
 “ which men are concerned, could have been otherwise
 “ than it *has been, is, or is to be*; or that the Divine Being
 “ who, as you justly say, knows things by their causes, as
 “ being himself the first cause, the source of power and
 “ activity to all other causes, should not have *intended*,
 “ every thing to be just as it is.” p. 220. So long as man
 is considered as a machine, dependent on a foreign agency
 for every motion, it must be as the Doctor as here represented it; but when we consider him under the idea of a moral self-moving Agent, having the spring of action in himself, and accountable to God for all his conduct, then it must be otherwise; for the supposition of a preceding

ceding cause of action, out of himself, contradicts every idea of *moral agency*, and the propriety of criminating him for his actions.

PAGE 221, 222, 223. Dr. Priestly suggests, that as there are laws of nature, directing the physical world, so there are laws of moral actions directing the moral world: which laws he is disposed to arrange under the general term *Phyics*; and by these laws he means the causes of moral actions, or those causes which secure the certainty of the actions of moral agents: he says, " My conclusion, that
" men could not, in any given case, act otherwise than
" they do, is not at all effected by the terms by which we
" distinguish the laws and causes, that respect the mind,
" from those which respect the external world. That
" there are *any laws*, and that there are *any causes*, to which
" the mind is subject, is all that my argument requires."
p. 223. But, if there be any certain physical laws which infallibly direct the mind, or will of moral agents, it is in vain to say any thing concerning moral agency, morality, rewards, and punishments, good or evil; for no such thing can exist among men, any more than it can exist among brute animals, or in the physical world.

PAGE 287. " But to will without a motive, or contrary to the influence of all motives presented to the
" mind, is a thing of which no one can be conscious."

—To

—To act without reason, by no means, corresponds with our ideas of a wise being, or a rational agent: Yet every man may feel in himself a liberty to act, or not to act; to do that which appears to him most eligible, or to do the reverse; being under no compulsion, besides that which arises from his own judgment: and that judgment is formed either by himself, from his own view of propriety, or self-gratification: and then the action is properly his own: or else it is formed by present objects and circumstances, which does not appear very probable; but were we to grant it for the sake of argument, even then, it would only prove him to be capable of discerning present circumstances, which is an evidence of self-agency, and consequently helps to overturn that scheme which it is meant to support. But, that the resolutions of the will arise not from present circumstances, is evident from the following mode of argument: If the judgment be formed by present circumstances, &c.—and if that judgment certainly move the will to choose a proper line of conduct, then it would follow, that, every man's judgment being formed by present circumstances, every man would be certain to act with propriety, and according to present circumstances, but observation and experience proves the contrary, for we often see men acting unsuitably to present circumstances, and we are obliged to condemn their conduct, as improper: by which we are convinced that they have a *will of their own*, over which present circumstances

circumstances have no control; and, that they act from a principle in themselves. This evidently shews, that man's judgment is formed from himself; which goes very far towards overturning the Doctor's hypothesis: and hence we infer, that the mind of man is not like a balance, as he insinuates, p. 228. — It is not destitute of principle, — for there is in every mind a distinct peculiar trait, — a measure of understanding and conscience, of judgment and inclination, — a certain inherent bias, that renders him obstinately bent upon those pursuits, which tend to self-gratification.

THE DOCTOR affirms, that a Necessarian, (in the strict sense) as a Necessarian, “has nothing to do with repentance, confession, or pardon, which are all adapted to a different, imperfect, and fallacious view of things.” (p. 301.) — And again, These, he says, “arise mechanically from his referring actions to himself.” (p. 302.) — This is speaking out. — This is honest, plain dealing. — Here is no disguise. — And the Doctor's scheme is hereby rendered, at least, consistent with itself: — much more so, than that of those men, who plead the cause of Necessity, and yet pretend to retain all the peculiar notions of the Christian Dispensation, whose views are inconsistent and contradictory. — In the view of a *Christian*, and to render his scheme of Necessity worthy of *his* acceptance, the Doctor has only to prove, that it harmonizes with
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the book of Divine Revelation.—But he is so far from pretending to do this, that he boldly affirms, the Deity, in his great condescension, has accommodated to the fallacious views of man, a system of religion, entirely opposed to his own scheme of Necessity.—Had I written the preceding Essays solely for those of Dr. Priestley's complexion, many of my arguments might have been spared; for they apply much better in opposing an EDWARDS, a TOPLADY, or others who have embraced the doctrine of Necessity on similar principles, but with far less address than either of them, and whose names scarce deserve to be mentioned along with these theological champions.—But these champions themselves, were mere novices when compared with Dr. Priestley, and had nothing like that eagle-eyed faith, by which he views this great system,—this universal scheme of Providence,—this vast chain of causes and effects,—and his own conduct, as part of an *immense* and *perfect whole*, included therein,—and who cannot, therefore, accuse himself of having done wrong, in the ultimate view of things,

VERY far different from this, was the humiliating doctrine taught by our heavenly REDEEMER, and his fore-runner, John the Baptist, when they made their appearance in our world, and preached, saying, “Repent
“ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—The Son of God could not have been ignorant of the real state of

the question, whether the doctrine of *Philosophical Necessity*, or the doctrine of *Moral Agency*, were true. — He could have no interest in deceiving his followers, or in misleading mankind. — And had he been a Necessarian, he must have known, that notions, or sentiments, could make no difference as to that universal scheme of Providence, and the certain accomplishment of every part of that *vast whole*, which infallibly secures the actions of *Moral Agents*. — It is, therefore, an impeachment of his *integrity* and *fidelity*, to suppose, that he could be guilty of imposing sentiments on men, which have no foundation in facts: and must render every thing he has said, suspicious and uncertain; and, therefore, unfit to be depended on; and himself a contemptible character; in comparison of whom, Dr. Priestley is a much more honest, wise, and intelligent agent; and, therefore, much fitter to be credited by all wise and sober men! — Whether the Doctor intended to degrade the SAVIOUR, that he might the more easily trample on the Christian religion, I leave to the judgment of my Readers, to determine for themselves.

IF, however, the LORD OF GLORY be such a contemptible object, why should the royal Psalmist exhort, saying, “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with
“fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he
“be

“ be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath
“ is kindled but a little: blessed are all they that put
“ their trust in him.” Pſal. ii. 10, 11, 12.

THE doctrine of REPENTANCE, is a prominent feature in divine revelation; it is the doctrine of the old testament as well as the new; and we are assured, in the most positive manner, that *except we repent we shall all likewise perish, and in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.* The Father of mercies has *exalted the Son with his right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* The blessed *Immanuel* shed his blood for the remission of sins, that sinners might be pardoned in a way of righteousness; for, “without shedding of blood
“ there is no remission.” Heb. ix. 22. He imparts to man, or works in him, by the agency of his holy Spirit, through the ministration of the word, or by some other means, the grace of *Repentance*, that he may render him fit and capable of receiving the great blessing of PARDON; for which he has taught all his humble followers to pray, in that most excellent model of prayer, which he gave to his Disciples for their imitation. And though a Necessarian may see no need of repentance, when wrapped up in the deep contemplation of his wonderful theory of an universal scheme of Providence, that renders all the actions of Moral Agents absolutely necessary: yet, let the Necessarian know, that, if the word of God be true, that

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universal scheme of Providence must either necessarily impel his soul to repent of his sins, or else he will find himself inevitably shut out of the kingdom of heaven.

ONE would think, that every wise and good man would abandon that scheme, which eventually sets aside the necessity of a sinner's repenting of his misdeeds, and turning to the paths of holiness and virtue with all his heart, as a scheme directly calculated to exclude him from the heavenly state, and to prevent his receiving that mercy, which is held forth to the penitent, in the doctrine of Christ crucified. Could it, indeed, be proved, that men have not transgressed the laws of God, then we might safely conclude, that repentance were unnecessary. But, that men come short of the requirements of the moral law, which commands them to love God with all their hearts, and their neighbours as themselves, is so self-evident a proposition, that it might be thought trifling with my Reader's time, were I to attempt proving it. If men have not sinned, the word of God is a fable, the gospel of salvation from the dreadful effects of sin, is an affront to common sense, the mission of the holy Spirit to restore man to a state of purity, and re-impress the Divine image upon his nature, is an imposition on our understanding, and all the displays of Divine goodness and mercy to sinful fallen man, is a mere fiction: then, also, those historic facts, recorded in the sacred books of the new testament, concerning

concerning the conversion of men from a state of sin and misery, to a state of grace and salvation, their repentance and reformation; and the instances of a similar change of heart and life in our own day, and under our own observation, are nothing but deceptions. We must not, then, believe the feelings of distress in our own hearts, on the account of sins committed by us against God's holy and righteous law: nor credit the professions of those who appear to be afraid of the just judgments of a sin-avenging God, who are fleeing from the wrath to come, and have an abhorrence of those things which they formerly practised, and a relish for those religious exercises which they once hated. We must have done with every thing real in religion and morality, and conclude the whole to be a deception, and a cunning device of subtle men, to keep the common people in a state of subjection to their superiors, or as a curiously well-contrived engine of state, well adapted to secure the authority of rulers over their subjects.

TAKING that for granted here, therefore, which has been proved under its proper head in the preceding Essays, viz. That men are sinners, is it not highly proper, that they should repent of their sins before God, and confess them with a broken heart and a contrite spirit? How would it correspond with the perfections of the Deity, and with the nature and fitness of things, to for-

give the fins of his revolting creatures, without their having a due humiliating sense of their base ingratitude to the best of Beings, and of their unsuitable returns for the greatest of favours conferred upon them? Can it comport with our ideas of propriety, that a rebel should be pardoned before he has been convinced of his criminal conduct, or perceived the turpitude of his actions, or regretted the baseness of his crime; or before he has resolved to amend his future ways? Do not Reason, and the nature of things suggest, that it would be unfit to tender a pardon to any one but such as sincerely repent?

AND shall we suffer ourselves to be carried away with a sentiment, the result of which, is calculated to impress the minds of men with a notion, that they have done nothing amiss, and that they have nothing to do with repentance, confession, or pardon, and "that these ideas rise mechanically in the mind of man, from his referring actions to himself?" Had the Divine Being given no laws to direct our actions;—had civilized nations never found it necessary to enact penal statutes, to prevent the suffering of injuries from our fellow creatures;—had there been no innate ideas of good and evil implanted in the mind of man;—had we no consciousness of right and wrong actions, any more than brute animals;—in that case, would referring actions to ourselves have involved the ideas of repentance, confession, or pardon?—Whence
came

came these ideas, at first, into the human mind? For they seem to have been of very early date; and must owe their origin to some cause: and where shall we seek for that, but in the Deity, who first discovered to man both the nature of his crime, and his gracious designs of mercy towards the human race.

FROM a serious reflection on these things, we see no reason that the *Necessarian* has to plume himself, on the idea of having nothing to do with repentance, confession, or pardon; for, if he has nothing to do with them, surely he can have nothing to do with the blessings connected with them, the blessings of grace here, and of eternal glory hereafter.

PAGE 390. The Doctor says, "But I have observed
" in my *Treatise on Necessity*, (p. 96, &c.) that, in the
" only sense in which the consideration of it" (*Necessity*)
" can operate as a motive of action, *every thing depends*
" *upon ourselves*, much more so than upon any other
" scheme; and therefore that the *Necessarian* must feel
" himself more strongly impelled to an exertion of his
" faculties than any other man."

"By a man's *making his own fortune*, I mean that his
" *success* depends upon his actions, as these depend upon
" his *volitions*, and his volitions upon the motives pre-

“fented to him. Supposing a man, therefore, to have
 “*propensities and objects of pursuit*, as his own happiness,
 “&c. &c. of which no system of faith can deprive him,
 “he will necessarily be roused to exert himself in pro-
 “portion to the strength of his propensity, and his belief
 “of the necessary connection between his *end* and his *en-*
 “*deavours*; and nothing but such an opinion as that of
 “philosophical liberty, which destroys that necessary
 “connection, can possibly slacken his endeavours.”

IN this passage the Doctor supposes, that the *belief* of Necessity will have a more powerful tendency to make a man exert himself, while labouring after attainments, than [the *belief* of moral agency. And could he have proved, that they who credit moral agency, do not think that means and ends are so closely connected together, that they are seldom or never separated; and could he have proved, that the Necessarian has never experienced that his utmost exertions and endeavours have failed, when the success of those endeavours has depended on the will of another agent; then his supposition might have been just. But I conceive, that the believer in moral agency, is as firmly persuaded that *means* and *end* are connected together, as any Necessarian can be: for he believes, that final salvation is *inseparably* connected with the obedience, sufferings, death, and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ;—With the mission, operation, and influence

fluence of the Holy Spirit; — With true repentance for our sins, a lively genuine faith in the Son of God, and with good works, as a fruit and effect of regenerating grace; and that salvation is not attainable without these means

THE doctrine of Necessarianism denies the necessity of Salvation, no creature being in any danger of coming short of the future happiness, which is the end of that universal scheme of Divine Providence, supposed to be drawn by *Infinite Wisdom*, and executed by *Omnipotence*: in which, not any of his creatures are deemed criminals, nor justly chargeable with the doing of any thing but what perfectly coincides with the views, designs, and appointments of the Deity, in whose sight every thing is as it ought to be, all perfect order and regularity, gradually ripening and hastening on, to that glorious end, which infinite Goodness has appointed. Now, I leave it to my Reader to determine for himself, whether the belief of such a system can, in the nature of things, be supposed to excite the Necessarian to make use of the means of salvation; or whether it be probable, that he will feel himself more strongly impelled to an exertion of his faculties, in this way, than any other man: and especially, than such men who believe their actions to be their own, who mourn under a deep sense of their aggravated crimes, who perceive their danger of sinking into the pit of remediless

mediless destruction, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour of mankind, the necessity of that faith in him, which is productive of good works, and who are persuaded, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Surely, if I might venture to give my opinion of the matter, I should conclude, that such a character is most likely to exert himself to attain that salvation, which he sees to be so absolutely necessary to his final happiness: and I could bring a cloud of witnesses to confirm my opinions, if it were necessary. Such as the Prodigal Son, the abashed Publican, the Thief on the cross, the trembling Jailor, the three thousand pricked in their hearts under Peter's sermon, and crowds of publicans and sinners, who followed the incarnate Saviour; while he declared to the proud Pharisees, when they murmured at his going to be guest with a man that was a sinner, and that he received sinners, and associated with them, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Hence it is clearly evident, that were he now upon earth, he would have nothing to do with those who have nothing to do with repentance, confession, and pardon; they falling so exactly under the description of those who are whole, in their own apprehension, and who have no need of him, the heavenly Physician.

I SHALL close these Strictures with expressing my surprise,

prise, that the Doctor, in the above-cited passage, should make use of unguarded expressions, which better apply to the scheme of Moral Agency, than to that of Necessity, i. e. "impelled to an exertion of his faculties," and, "roused to exert himself," which phrases make me almost ready to think, while reading them, that surely the dispute is about words, and not about things; such phrases being only applicable to such agents as are possessed of a self-moving principle.

SHOULD the Doctor ever peruse these few Strictures, I trust, he will neither be offended with the author of them, nor with the manner in which his observations have been treated: for, on his own plan of Necessitarianism, while he believes that he could not do otherwise than write in defence of that hypothesis, it is to be expected, that he will consider me as under a similar necessity to oppose it; and so let Necessity have the credit or blame of what it has induced us to advance on both sides the question.

THUS, the doctrine of absolute Philosophical Necessity, as it depends on a Divine agency, makes that agency to operate against, and to be at continual war with itself, sometimes urging men to commit acts of outrageous cruelty against the innocent, who have done nothing to deserve their displeasure; and then, exerting itself to prevent

prevent the threatened destruction, and avert the impending blow, by providing a safe retreat for the innocent lambs of his flock; thereby defeating the purposes, and disappointing the unprovoked rage and malice of their enemies. This is admirably exemplified, in the history of Saul the king of Israel, and David, who succeeded him in the kingdom. To speak the language of the Necessarian, God filled the heart of Saul with jealousy and rage against poor David, who had been an instrument in the hands of providence, to deliver the people of Israel from the Philistines, therefore Saul persecuted David with unrelenting fury, and would doubtless have destroyed him, if the same Divine agency had not interposed to preserve him, and rescue him from the enemy, in times of the most imminent danger. The frequent disappointments which Saul met with, under a Divine agency, sharpened his resentments, and caused him to double his diligence, in order to accomplish his wicked purpose of destroying David; and, on the other hand, the same agency, exerted for his protection, as speedily hastened to the combat, and warded off every blow that was aimed against him, and finally accomplished the promise that had been made to him, by seating him upon the throne of Israel, and destroying all those enemies who opposed his advancement. If, therefore, Saul was under an absolute necessity to persecute David, arising from a Divine agency, and David was protected by the same agency, then the agency of
God

God was set in opposition to, and counteracted itself; which is an idea that can by no means be admitted by sober reason: for all the above circumstances may easily be made to correspond with our ideas of Moral Agency.—Our Lord says, a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. If, therefore, God be divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand.—But if his agency be set against itself, his kingdom is divided against itself and cannot stand: and therefore the doctrine of Necessarianism directly leads to a contradiction, and must be wrong.—For it attributes to the agency of the God of peace and love, all the opposition, tumult, disorder and rage, that we behold in the moral world.—That the Divine Being should exert his agency, against the disorders in the moral world, well accords with common sense, and with all our ideas of Deity, as perfectly holy, just and good, and consistent with himself, in all his operations: but the supposition, that his agency produces all those disorders, that he may exert the same agency to rectify them, can never comport with a just theory of his Divine nature and his moral perfections, exhibited to us in the sacred Volume of Divine Revelation; and therefore, must be a self-contradicting, inconsistent supposition in itself; and in this it bears a striking resemblance to all the errors in the moral world.

CONCLUSION.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING explored the intricate mazes of this abstruse subject, in the best manner I could, and having considered every thing that I deemed necessary in order to set this matter in the clearest point of view, and thrown all the light upon it possible in so small a compass; I presume, it may answer a good purpose to some of my readers, at least, whose memories may not be the most retentive, to exhibit the whole argument in one general comprehensive view, by recapitulating all it's parts in as concise a manner as may be, that they may be enabled, with ease and advantage to themselves, impartially to sum up the evidence on both sides.

IN all metaphysical subjects, it is highly proper to reason from some well-known and well-established fact, or else we are liable to wander in the paths of error and uncertainty. The most acute Mathematician, if he take up but one false proposition through the whole series, is sure to arrive at a wrong conclusion. There is no certainty in any train of reasoning, that is not founded upon matters of fact, nor is it safe to rest a superstructure upon a foundation

dation that has been come at through a maze of metaphysical reasonings, which may as soon conduct the reasoner to a wrong, as a right conclusion.

DR. Priestley rests his *scheme of Necessity* upon the doctrine of *Materialism*. But what is his foundation of materialism?—What well known facts does he adduce, and then argue from thence, to prove the doctrine?—But if *Materialism* be right, yet that is not by any means a proper basis to build the doctrine of *Necessity* upon: for the same arguments by which he endeavours to establish the materiality of the soul of man, would likewise prove God himself to be material, and consequently in a state of *Necessity* as well as ourselves.—Let the Doctor but allow, that we have a soul of a superior nature, to that matter which it acts upon, and then we shall have some ground to proceed on, in the consideration of his scheme of *Materialism*; but, as he reduces the soul of man, to a mere property of matter, he must first produce much stronger arguments to prove his hypothesis, before any considerate mind will give him the least credit for his assertions.—But for what intent does he deprive man of his soul?—The object he has in view by so doing, as far as I have been able to comprehend him, is, that he may reduce him to a mere machine, and so lay the foundation of *Necessitarianism*. The only basis of his *Necessitarianism*, as far as I am able to perceive it, is, the inability of man to act of himself;

himself; this inability he endeavours to prove, from his being material, supposing that matter is incapable of self-motion; not once considering, that the vital principle, whatever that may be, is itself a principle of self motion: he takes it to be only a principle that renders man capable of being acted upon, but not capable of acting of itself. And here it is that he stumbles.—This point, however, must be supported at all events, or else the favourite scheme of *Necessarianism* cannot be established; for only admit, that a man is at liberty to act of himself, without the interposition of a foreign agency; or that he does not need to be continually impelled to action by external causes, and the whole scheme of *Necessarianism* is demolished.—*Man is material, the soul is a mere property of matter, he cannot act of himself, and therefore depends on a foreign agency, for his every motion. and consequently must be in a state of ABSOLUTE NECESSITY!*—This is the Doctor's Scheme.—The ground on which he builds his hypothesis, is man's inability to act of himself, which he endeavours to prove by the doctrine of *Materialism*.—But were we to allow that man *is material*, and that his soul is no more than a *property*: yet it does not follow from thence, that he is incapable of acting of himself: except it could be proved, that the property does not contain in it the power of self motion. We have endeavoured to establish the doctrine of self-motion, by solid arguments, drawn from matters of fact: and therefore, though he should be
able

able to prove that the soul of man is only a property, yet he would not be one whit nearer the establishment of the doctrine of *Necessity*, until he should be able to prove, that self-motion is not contained in that property, and that man is not a *Moral Agent*, not accountable to God for his actions, nor the object of praise or blame. Yet on this ground has the Doctor placed his doctrine of *Necessarianism*.

PROFESSOR Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will, draws this conclusion from a long train of Metaphysical reasoning, viz. "That the soul has no influence, no hand in
 " the diversity of the effect; and that the difference of
 " the effect cannot be owing to any thing in the soul;
 " or which is the same thing, the soul don't determine
 " the diversity of the effect."—His meaning is to establish this proposition, *That though the soul be an active agent, yet it cannot act, in a particular manner, without being acted upon by some external agency*; which is reducing the soul to a state similar to that of a machine: and, upon this foundation, HE builds his superstructure of *absolute moral Necessity*. I have asked several of his admirers to inform me how he fairly arrives at this conclusion, but have never been so happy as to meet with any one who was able to give me the least satisfactory answer, or even conjecture, by what means he came to that conclusion: and yet, only admit, that the soul can determine the diversity of the

M m effect,

effect, or, in other words, that it can direct the actions of man without the influence of an external agency, in opposition to the supposed power and force of external motives, and the foundation on which Mr. Edward's rests his system, is totally removed, and the whole superstructure tumbles into ruins, there being no argument whatever, left to support it.

Thus we have viewed the foundations on which these eminent Writers have thought proper to build their respective schemes of Necessity; and we will now proceed to take a view of the proper foundation of Moral Agency.

THE doctrine of *Moral Agency* is founded on the immutable and solid basis of incontrovertible facts; such as — on the Nature and Perfections of the Moral Governor, his goodness, holiness, rectitude, infinite intelligence, and immutability, which renders it impossible for God to be the efficient cause of the sinful conduct of his rational creatures: — on the Nature, Properties, and Situation of *Moral Agents*, possessed of a moral faculty, moral sense, consciousness, liberty, self-moving, self-acting agency, and having the principle that determines their actions in themselves; — and on being placed, originally, in a state of *probation* or *trial*, which clearly proves them to be Moral Agents: — on the Nature of Moral Government, being a government by law, and neither by agency nor instinct, which
government

vernment perfectly accords with providential government ; and is a clear proof of Moral Agency :—on the Nature of *Moral Evil*, which is not relative only, but real, and as such, diametrically opposite to the perfections of the Moral Governor, and, therefore, could not originate in him, as a God of immaculate holiness, and spotless purity ; for impurity cannot be derived from purity ; and consequently, it must have been the work of a Moral Agent :—on the Doctrine of Rewards and Punishments, which evidently shews, that every man's actions are his own, in a proper sense, and not ascribable to some other agency :—on the Possibility of a peccable, finite, mutable creature, sinning of itself, without the aid of any other agent, when left to the freedom of its own will :—on the Giving of laws, with proper sanctions to excite to obedience :—on Promises made to the obedient, to encourage them to continue steadfast in the path of duty :—on Threatenings addressed to the sinner to stop his wicked course, that he might not continue to rebel :—on the Gospel of Salvation through a Redeemer ; which fully proves, that men are Moral Agents, and have contracted guilt, which required the blood of atonement, to make satisfaction for the injuries which they have done :—and, on the Final Judgment of the last day ; for, if there be no moral agency, there can be no judgment. (Who ever yet pretended to judge the conduct of any one that was not a Moral Agent?)

AND what have the defenders of Necessarianism to set in opposition to the doctrine of *Moral Agency*, founded on all these facts, facts that can never be overturned as long as the word of God continues to be the standing rule of the Christian's faith: so long as God himself continues to be the MORAL GOVERNOR, even to all eternity. In opposition to the doctrine of *Moral Agency*, they bring forward the supposition, that God has laid an universal scheme of Providence, which includes in it all the actions of men, and every event dependent thereon;—they deny *self-agency* to man, represent him as a machine turned by a foreign power; and, because they can find no other being to turn this thinking machine, they attribute this business to the Deity, and suppose, that he has decreed all the actions of men; which decree, they endeavour to prove by God's foreknowledge, alledging, that he could not foreknow the actions of free agents, nor those future events dependent on them; and from hence conclude, that he must have decreed all the actions of mankind, or included them in his universal scheme of Providence, which is the same thing.—Ask them why he could not foreknow the actions of free agents? They say, he has no evidence by which to foreknow them, except he decreed them; and, therefore, he must have decreed them at all events!—Ask them to prove, that he has decreed all things, and they refer you to his foreknowledge! Ask them to prove his foreknowledge, and they refer

refer you to his decrees, instead of founding Foreknowledge on its only proper basis, GOD'S INFINITE INTELLIGENCE!

THESE objections have been answered in their proper places, and their utter futility shewn, and the futility of their hypothesis, which is big with absurdities, shocking to the feelings of every one who has the least degree of reverence for the sacred character of the Divine Being: for, while they divest man of a *self-moving power*, and make God the contriver and instigator of all his sinful actions, they effectually make him *the author and efficient cause* of all *moral evil*, and charge him with all the folly, disorder, cruelty, and wickedness that is in the world. While the scheme of Moral Agency is chargeable with nothing but this, viz. that we cannot fully explain how the Divine Being should foreknow the free actions of Moral Agents, except by his infinite intelligence. Thus having stated, in the best manner I am able, both sides of the question, and contributed my mite towards bringing this matter to a final issue, I will take my leave of the Reader, with this most sincere and most hearty prayer, that the Spirit of God may lead him into all those truths, which stand connected with his final salvation and eternal happiness in the world of glory.

F I N I S.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE many unavoidable and unforeseen concerns which engaged the Author at the time this Work was printing, obliged him to leave, in a great measure, the superintendence of the Press to the inexperience of a young Compositor, which has occasioned many orthographical Errors.—Such as have been observed materially to alter or obscure the sense are the following, which he hopes the candid Reader will correct with his pen.

E R R A T A.

- Page 14. line 17. *for his read is*
 16. — 11. *for then read than*
 32. — 22. *for they read the*
 66. — 8. *for subjectly read subjectively*
 69. — 7. *for then read than*
 74. *for PRIESTLY read PRIESTLEY, and in several other places*
 85. — 5. *for Whirseus read Witfius*
 95. — 6. *for were read where*
 150. — 14. *for EDWAR's read EDWARD's*
 155. — 20. *after wherever read he*
 165. — 12. *for versality read versatility*
 173. — 22. *for then read than*
 178. — 25. *for EDWARD's read EDWARDS*
 188. — 21. *for caparicious read capricious*
 197. — 23. *for irremedilefs read irremediable*
 206. — 1. marg. *before God read If we say*
 207. — 6. *read of the nations*
 240. — 5. *for from read to*
 262. — 3. *for intended read intending*
 282. — 7. *for are read art*
 289. — 4. *for hot read not*
 303. — 23. *for into read unto*
 305. — 17. *for send read sending.*

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N. B. From p. 44 to 62. Running Title—*for Moral Government read Providential Government.*

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